

AUSTRALIAN WATER

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New South Wales Mentoring Program - Mentor Guide

Mentoring is a formal or informal relationship between two people—a more experienced mentor (usually senior or mid level and outside the mentee’s chain of supervision) and a less experienced mentee. Mentoring has been identified as an important influence in professional development in both the public and private sector. The relationship is established to strengthen competencies needed to enhance job performance and career prospects for the mentee. Ideally, it should be based upon encouragement, constructive comments, openness, mutual trust, respect and a willingness to learn and share information.

The role of the mentor

A mentor is an individual who is experienced and knowledgeable in a particular field, who provides guidance and leadership to an assigned mentee. The mentor enters into an agreement with a mentee in order to provide expertise and practical experience. In addition to acting as a sounding board for the mentee, mentors provide industry knowledge, an in-depth understanding of networking and protocol, and advice on career progression.

Why become a mentor?

Mentors may become involved in a mentoring relationship to:

- Share their expertise with another person working in water
- Expand their professional network
- Invest in the future of the water sector
- Obtain a fresh perspective on their area of work
- Enhance experience in their areas of expertise
- Invest in the careers of others
- Enhance their credibility in the organisation

Am I the right candidate for a mentorship?

Mentors must have:

- Enthusiasm for the mentoring program
- Good listening skills
- An inquisitive mind
- A passion for their work and industry
- The ability to provide constructive and positive feedback
- Patience
- Good organisational skills
- Time to dedicate to a mentorship

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What to expect from a mentee

The initial meeting between the Mentoring Program Coordinator, mentor and mentee should clearly and openly address expectations about the mentorship and the roles each party will play in the relationship. Broadly speaking though, there are a number of things you can expect from a mentee, that they:

- Are upfront about their expectations of you at the beginning of the mentorship
- Take initiative and drive the relationship
- Will seek feedback on a regular basis
- Will listen effectively
- Will meet and / or communicate with you according to the communications scheduled negotiated at the initial meeting
- Are honest and upfront in their dealings with you

How you can prepare for a mentorship

It is useful to write a brief statement outlining what you will be able to offer a mentee (this is completed in the pre launch survey). This will provide a point of reference for the launch event, as well as your first meeting with the mentee and Mentoring Program Coordinator. This statement should cover:

- A description of your current role
- An indication of the roles you have held in the past
- Your primary area of expertise
- Any particular network access you may have or relevant organisations with which you are involved
- What sort of educational experiences you have had and how they have helped you
- Any relevant roles you hold outside of your employment (for example sitting on an industry committee)
- What attracted you to being a mentor

Note: do not include any information you do not wish to be shared to potential mentees.

Your first meeting

Once the Mentoring Program Coordinator has paired you with a mentee you should have your first meeting. This is an opportunity for setting proposed discussion points with your mentee. Allow the mentee to guide the discussion points, but also offer advice where you feel necessary. Your first meeting is a good chance for your mentee to ask further questions about your skills, expertise and knowledge. Your mentee may have prepared an individual development plan (IDP) prior to this first meeting and might wish to use this as a guide to planning future meetings.

Before this first meeting it would be good to think about:

- The duration and amount of time you will be able to dedicate to a mentorship
- What type of communication methods (i.e. phone, in person, email), would you prefer for this mentoring relationship?

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During the mentorship

- In providing the mentee with career guidance, the mentor might cover a range of areas, such as: the mentee's resume and job searching, performance reviews, technical skills, professional development and further study or training, work/life balance, job satisfaction, interpersonal and networking skills, and career management and planning.
- Mentors are not required to provide all the answers, instead the mentor encourages the mentee to use their available resources to identify solutions. It is therefore, a partnership where the mentor and mentee work in a collaborative manner. Sometimes it might be easier to simply provide the mentee with the answers, but this is not conducive to a meaningful learning experience.
- Mentees may be apprehensive about contacting their mentor, not wanting to intrude on the mentor's time or resources. Mentors can help alleviate this concern by periodically forwarding encouraging emails to give the mentee confidence to maintain contact.
- Ensure you have a good grasp of the mentee's circumstances and structure your advice and feedback accordingly. Convey practical advice in terms of the mentee's career development goals. This means continually asking questions of the mentee, not making assumptions.
- Understand that mentoring is a commitment and you should be in a position where you can be available to the mentee in line with the mentorship guidelines. There may also be instances when the mentee approaches you with questions or issues. You should be open to this possibility, however please approach the Mentoring Program Coordinator if the mentee becomes too demanding.
- Provide feedback wherever possible, and bear in mind that as an early-career employee, feedback should be conveyed in a constructive and sensitive manner.
- Get the mentee active. Involve them in appropriate meetings, either as an observer or as a presenter and introduce them to relevant contacts. Arrange projects or assignments for them if appropriate and achievable in terms of the mentorship agreement.
- Consult the Mentoring Program Coordinator if you are unhappy with the arrangement.

What you can expect from AWA during your mentorship

- Mentor/Mentee Preference survey will be issued
- Matching process undertaken by AWA
- A Launch event will take place at the beginning of the program
- Regular emails with mentoring tips
- Conclusion and feedback email
- AWA as a point of contact if you have any queries

AWA are available to assist you with any queries or concerns that arise throughout your mentorship.