

AUSTRALIAN WATER

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WA/NT Mentoring Program – Mentee Guide

Information for Mentees

Mentoring is a formal or informal relationship between two people—a more experienced mentor (can be senior or middle tier and outside the mentee’s chain of supervision) and a less experienced (usually junior) 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 mentee

A mentee is a less experienced, usually early-career individual who is guided by an assigned mentor. The role of the mentee is to take advantage of the opportunities offered them by their mentor. Mentees connect with a mentor in order to gain knowledge and experience. As such, they should be open to new information and learning experiences. Mentees should strike a careful balance between being critical and inquisitive in relation to the guidance offered by the mentor and being respectful of the service they are providing.

Why become a mentee?

Mentees may become involved in a mentoring relationship to:

- Improve skills
- Gain knowledge
- Learn about other career opportunities
- Explore your potential in development areas yet untapped
- Expand leadership abilities
- Make valuable contacts with people working in water
- Enhance opportunities for career advancement
- Develop an area of technical expertise
- Learn and grow professionally

Am I the right candidate for a mentorship?

Mentees should be:

- Enthusiastic about the mentoring program
- Interested in developing their careers
- Good listeners and communicators
- Able to take responsibility for their own development
- Open to receiving feedback
- Willing to accept challenges
- Positive about change and growth
- Able to set goals and work towards them
- In a position to dedicate time to the mentorship program

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What to expect from a Mentor

The initial meeting between a 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 mentor, that they:

- Are upfront about their skills, qualifications and the time they have to spend with the mentee
- Will serve as a source of information and expertise in their applicable area
- Will impart information to the extent that confidentiality restrictions allow
- Will share their knowledge
- Will meet and / or communicate with you according to the communications scheduled negotiated at the initial meeting

How you can prepare for a mentorship

If you wish to become a mentee, you should consider what you wish to learn and what skills you want to gain. It is useful to put together a very basic individual development plan (IDP). If your supervisor or manager is engaged in the mentorship process, it is advisable to create your IDP in consultation with them.

An IDP is individually tailored and describes objectives and activities for the student or employee's career development. It is a fluid document and should be revisited throughout the mentorship and indeed your career. Ensure when writing this document that your objectives are specific, measurable and achievable.

Your IDP should cover:

- Your strengths and attributes
- Areas of your performance that need to be improved
- Where you want to take your career in the short, medium and long term
- Personal development and training that you would like to undertake
- How you think a mentorship would assist in working towards your career goals

You may wish to prepare an IDP prior to the launch event (if attending), to help guide conversation with potential mentors. Even if you do not wish to prepare an IDP, it will still be useful to you to have a think about the above points, and perhaps make some brief notes.

The Australian Water Association's Mentoring Program Coordinator(s) will facilitate pairing of mentors and mentees based on the preferences specified by all parties.

Launch event (not compulsory for program participation)

Take an active role in conversations with prospective mentors. Both you and your potential mentors will benefit from you giving some thought to relevant questions before the event. Asking questions will assist you to determine who is a suitable mentor for your needs and help mentors determine who they are best placed to work with.

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Ask them questions such as:

- What can you, as a mentor, bring to a mentoring relationship?
- What positions have you held in the past?
- What qualifications or training do you have?

Your first meeting

Once the Mentoring Program Coordinator has paired you with a prospective mentor you should have your first meeting.

It is the mentee who is expected to drive the mentoring relationship by developing the agenda or discussion points for the mentor to comment on. It is the mentee's responsibility to build rapport with the mentor and to ask the right questions, seek relevant information and utilise the connections given by the mentor. Going through your IDP with your mentor in the first meeting can assist you in communicating your vision for the ongoing agenda of your meetings.

Your first meeting is a great time to discuss in further detail some of the questions you may ask your mentor at the launch event. You can also discuss some logistical questions such as:

- How much time do you anticipate being able to spend working with me?
- What type of communication methods (i.e. phone, in person, email, virtual meetings) would you prefer for this mentoring relationship?

During the mentorship

- Understand that often your mentor may be a senior level employee. As such, they will be very busy and you should bear that in mind in your interactions with them.
- Be scrupulous in the notes you take during your mentorship.
- Ask questions.
- Honour your commitments to the mentorship in terms of attendance at meetings and communication with the Mentoring Program Coordinator and mentor. Be courteous and provide advanced notice if you cannot honour a meeting commitment.
- Ask for feedback often and take it on board in a constructive manner. Remember that you are in a mentorship to learn and receive feedback so avoid taking this personally or getting defensive.
- Make the most of opportunities offered such as networking possibilities, attendance at meetings and seminars etc.
- Revisit your individual development plan often and assess the extent to which you are on track. Make adjustments where appropriate.
- Consult the Mentoring Program Coordinator if you are unhappy with the arrangement.

Please do NOT ask your mentor for a job. This is not the role of a mentor and can be offensive and/or put them in an awkward position.

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What you can expect from the AWA during your mentorship

- A Launch event will take place at the beginning of the program
- Mentor/Mentee Preference survey will be issued post the launch event
- Matching process undertaken by AWA
- Email to put mentors/mentees in touch shortly after the launch event
- Regular emails with mentoring tips
- Catch up event may be organised shortly after the launch event
- Conclusion and feedback email
- AWA Program Coordinator(s) as a point of contact if you have any queries

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

At the end of the mentorship

The program runs for 12 months. Unless either party terminates the mentoring agreement early, the mentorship ends at an agreed date and time between the mentor and mentee. Some mentoring relationships last for years.

The end of the 12 month program is a good opportunity to revisit your IDP and assess the extent to which you achieved the goals of the mentorship.

It would be useful to write a brief summary of your experience to be provided to the Mentoring Program Coordinator(s). Provide information on the appropriateness of the pairing, what worked, what didn't work, and how valuable you found the experience overall.