

AUSTRALIAN WATER

ASSOCIATION

YOUNG WATER PROFESSIONALS MENTORING PROGRAM

SA BRANCH

MENTEE GUIDE

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Introduction

Mentoring is a formal or informal relationship between two people—a more experienced mentor (usually senior 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 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 enter into an agreement 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.

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

What to expect from a mentor

The initial meeting between facilitator, 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

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What to expect from the mentoring program

The mentoring program has been designed based on feedback and experience from a wide range of mentoring programs, especially the programs previously run by the AWA throughout Australia. While your experience in your partnership will vary depending on your mentoring relationship, the program will provide you with monthly information and discussion topics to assist you in getting the most out of your mentoring relationship. These topics are by no means intended to limit your mentoring discussions. Rather they are provided to help initiate conversations and assist you with thinking about your personal development.

The program also provides two mentoring events, roughly once every six months. These events are integral to the program and have been developed to provide some more facilitated discussion of mentoring, hear ideas and thoughts from other mentoring pairs and develop your professional networks. The events also give you a chance to meet face to face with members of the Young Water Professionals committee who facilitate the program and address any issues you may be experiencing. Because these events are a significant cornerstone of the program, it is expected that you will make every effort to attend them with your mentoring partner.

How you can prepare for a mentorship

If you have not done so already, you should consider what you wish to learn and what skills you want to gain from mentoring. To do this, it is useful to put together a very basic individual development plan (IDP). You may find it helpful to create your IDP in consultation with your supervisor or manager.

An IDP is individually tailored and describes objectives and activities for your 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, measureable and achievable.

When writing an IDP you 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

During the mentorship

Understand that often your mentor will 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 facilitator 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.

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- 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 mentorship facilitator if you are unhappy with the arrangement.
- Take the opportunity to develop your own action plan to set out your own goals and timelines. This can be reviewed with your mentor including regular check ins.

At the end of the mentorship

Unless either party terminates the mentoring agreement early, the mentorship ends on the date negotiated at the first meeting and outlined in the agreement. There may be an opportunity to extend the mentoring relationship if both mentor and mentee agree but this will be outside the scope of the mentoring program.

It would be useful to write a brief summary of your experience to be provided to the facilitator. Provide information on the appropriateness of the pairing, what worked, what didn't work, and how the experience went overall.

Where to get help

The Young Water Professionals Mentoring Program run by the SA Branch is facilitated by the SA Young Water Professionals committee. To ensure any issues are addressed in a timely manner, the SA Branch Manager should be your first point of contact. If the Branch Manager is unable to resolve your issue immediately, it will then be directed to the most appropriate committee member.

Opportunities to discuss your mentoring relationship with YWP Committee members will also be available during the Mentoring events run as part of the program.