

# **AUSTRALIAN WATER**

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ASSOCIATION

## **YOUNG WATER PROFESSIONALS MENTORING PROGRAM**

### **SA BRANCH**

### **MENTOR 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 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.

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

### What to expect from a mentee

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 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

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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

It is useful to write a brief statement outlining what you will be able to offer a mentee. This will provide a point of reference for your first meeting with the mentee and mentorship facilitator. 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
- The duration and amount of time you will be able to dedicate to a mentorship

## 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
- 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.

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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 agreement. There may also be instances outside of this agreement when the mentee approaches you with questions or issues. You should be open to this possibility, but should approach the mentorship facilitator 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 mentorship facilitator if you are unhappy with the arrangement

## **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.