



A User Guide for Mentoring

for the NRM Workforce of Western
Australia



Purpose of this guide

The aim of this guide is to help NRM organisations implement a formal mentoring program as required for the ongoing development of NRM staff within their organisation.

While this guide is focussed on formal mentoring, some of the processes will be used to add value to the many informal mentoring activities that often occur within and between organisations.

The guide promotes the notion that sound planning is required for a successful mentoring program.

The content of this guide is generic, and can be applied to all levels and all disciplines of the NRM organisation.

What is mentoring?

Mentoring is “an alliance of two people that creates a space for dialogue which results in reflection, action and learning for both” (Rolfe, 2006).

Formal mentoring is a planned activity that focuses on specific challenges facing the mentee and the setting of goals to address them. It needs an allocation of time and commitment from all parties (including the employer) to support the mentoring relationship.

Mentoring is typically a one-to-one relationship between a more experienced and a less experienced employee which is based upon encouragement, constructive comments, openness, mutual trust, respect and a willingness to learn and share.

A mentor is seen as a “wise guide” who doesn’t have to be an expert in the field of interest, but is able to ask useful questions that help the mentee explore their situation. Being a good mentor is more about asking the right questions, rather than giving the right answers.

Mentoring helps the mentee approach situations with confidence, having talked through the various options and possible consequences.

Mentoring must be voluntary to ensure that participants are committed to the mentoring process.

Management commitment

For any formal mentoring program to work, there must be support and endorsement by the organisation’s management, including an allocation of time for mentoring within staff work-plans

Managers play an active role in promoting the program and giving the mentoring program credibility and value.

Mentoring needs to be viewed as a core tool to aid staff development. A strong mentoring program is a cost-effective strategy to attract, develop and retain staff in your organisation.

Benefits of mentoring

Mentees

will benefit from:

- the structured approach to planning and reflection for learning
- access to a “sounding board” to try out new concepts and ideas.
- a supportive environment where they are encouraged to take risks and learn constructively from failure

Leading to

- more knowledge and skills in a particular area of interest
- increased confidence in undertaking their daily work
- understanding the responsibility for their own learning

Mentors

will benefit from:

- the satisfaction of helping another person grow and further develop by sharing their knowledge and skills
- being challenged to think about their perspectives and viewpoints
- the challenge of having to explain often complex principles which then improves their own understanding

Leading to the

- honing their own professional skills
- recognition and respect for their knowledge

The Organisation

will benefit from:

- ‘On the job’ learning of skills and knowledge for staff
- Expanded support networks for employees and the organisation
- Staff with increased communication skills and able to effectively talk through and analyse problems

Leading to

- improved delivery of services through better informed and skilled staff
- increased staff satisfaction.

Mentor/Mentee relationships

Mentoring can only be based on a supportive relationship. Without a common understanding of that relationship, any mentoring involvement will not succeed.

A successful mentoring relationship is based on:

- mutual trust and respect
- willingness to learn and share knowledge
- openness and supportiveness
- constructive feedback

Established relationships may not exist in a formal mentoring program. Mentors from outside the mentee's usual network may be needed to meet the learning objectives of the mentee.

Time and effort must be spent to identify a mentor that will meet the needs of the mentee and to establish a mutually rewarding relationship at the beginning of the mentoring association.

A line manager or supervisor should not mentor staff that they're directly responsible for.

The mentoring process

Successful mentoring programs have:

- Support of the organisation or business
- A clearly defined purpose
- A clear set of expectations from the mentor and mentee, that are understood by both parties
- An agreement (and commitment) to the frequency and duration of mentoring interactions
- A monitoring and evaluation component
- Agreement on when the relationship will end.

The mentee should have clear goals that they want to achieve from a mentoring program.

This should include areas in which they want to grow and develop. They should be as specific as possible.

This will help them find a mentor, or assist the organisation in finding and matching them with a mentor. It will also help the mentor understand the needs of the mentee better.

Steps involved

1. Mentors and mentees meet face-to-face and formalise their relationship by completing the mentoring agreement (Appendix 1) and refining goals to be achieved (Appendix 2).
2. Mentors and mentees continue to meet and work together on a mutual learning journey.
3. Midway through the mentoring time frame, both parties should review their progress and satisfaction.
4. Concluding evaluation and end of formal relationship (Appendix 3).

Matching mentees and mentors

Matching the mentor with the mentee is a critical part of any mentoring scheme and is usually the role of a coordinator or independent person.

The mentor will need to have solid skills in:

- Listening
- Feedback
- Empathy

Set some criteria to help the selection process before this process begins.

Some criteria to consider are:

- The type of support required as identified by the mentee and coordinator
- Similarity in roles and past and present work experience
- Potential for having a positive relationship
- Willingness to invest time and effort in the mentoring relationship and fulfil the agreed commitments
- Ability to give and receive constructive and honest feedback
- Similarity in interests, hobbies and social activities
- Geographical proximity (depending on the organisation)

Roles of mentees and mentors

During a mentoring session both parties should play a specific role

Mentee	Mentor
The mentee should keep notes on meetings and be prepared to review the notes prior to the next meeting. Set goals & actions. Review your action items. This is the starting point for the learning cycle.	The mentor's role is to listen, ask probing questions and give constructive feedback. This is an action learning program for the mentee, so while it is tempting to jump in and tell them what they should do, it is a far better learning experience for them if they can get there themselves.
Mentees should consider all ideas from their mentor and together consider how appropriate they are for their situation.	The key to mentoring comes back to good active listening skills. Be fully present, focusing on the mentee and what they are saying
Maintain confidentiality. This will help the relationship to be honest and upfront.	Ask insightful, open ended questions that help the mentee explore their situation
	Seek first to truly understand their situation before leaping in with ideas.

The mentoring conversation

To make the most from the mentoring interactions, Mentors are encouraged to ask questions that move mentees from where they are now to where they would like to be in the future. The Mentoring conversation (Rolfe, 2006, Figure 1) is based on Kolb's learning cycle and is a tool that assists this questioning

Stage four

The final stage focuses on ongoing performance, where the mentor checks to see how the implementation is proceeding. The mentee reflects on how they have gone and what they can learn as a result.

Example questions:

How do you think your plan went?
 What factors were important to achieving an outcome?
 Why do you think that happened?

Stage three

Is all about the mentee planning how to get where they want to be. They develop plans, consider strategies and gain the required support.

Example questions:

What do you see as your options?
 Which of your alternatives is most likely to lead to that result?
 What do you think is the best way to achieve the result you are after?
 What information will you need?
 Who could you ask about this topic to find out more?
 What do you see as the obstacles you face?

Stage one

The mentor asks thought provoking questions of the mentee to help them determine where they are now and where they might like to be. This self assessment helps the mentee examine their past and present and map out possibilities for the future.

Example questions:

What things have you been working on?
 What do you think is important?
 What kinds of problems are you encountering?
 Where are you stuck?
 What have you done so far to address this problem?

Stage two

Helps the mentee decide where they want to be by gathering information, exploring options and then setting goals.

Example questions:

What are you trying to accomplish?
 What result do you want to see?
 What do you want to see happen?

The Mentoring Conversation

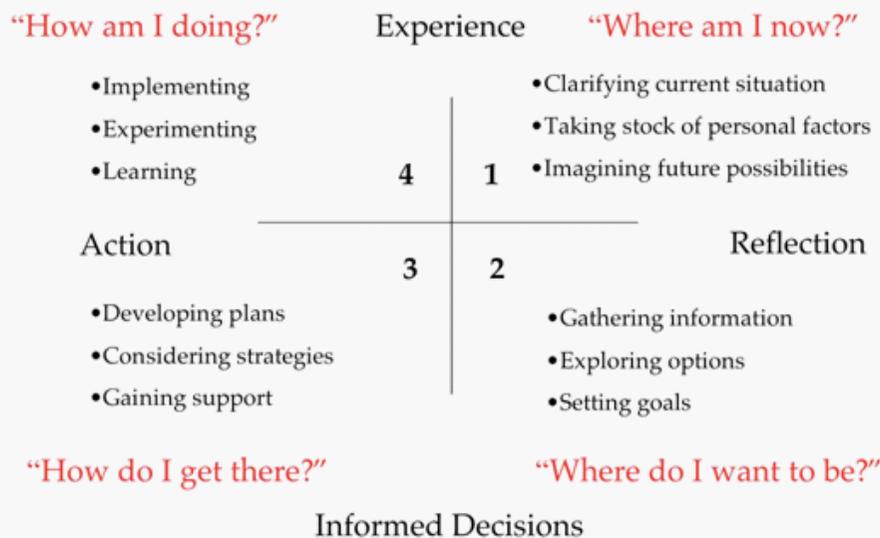


Figure 1: The mentoring conversation (Rolfe, 2006)

Building relationships

Mentoring is a relationship, so mentors and mentees should be prepared to share their thoughts and feelings openly. They should take time to get to know each other, as this lays a good foundation for further conversations.

The relationship will develop over time.

The beginning of any new relationship can be awkward. They don't know what to expect, although they certainly have expectations or a set of preconceived notions.

As parties are preparing to enter the mentor/mentee relationship, both will probably be feeling apprehensive and excited about the adventure to follow.

Here are some things to keep in mind as this journey begins:

1. You will both be nervous. You will each feel as though you are expected to perform in a particular way or to achieve a particular goal or set of goals. You are each likely to feel as though you are a title, mentor or mentee, rather than a person. You will also be wondering what the other person expects from you.
2. You are both valuable to the relationship. Although it is true that both participants will be working to help the mentee reach his or her goal, the mentee and the mentor are on equal footing within the relationship. Together, you have a much wider perspective and a greater set of resources with which to work than either of you had on your own.
3. You do not yet trust each other. Trust comes from a sense of comfort with another person, and comfort comes from repeated experience. Trust is developed over time, once we have a good idea of who the other person is, what he or she values, how he or she responds in particular situations and how he or she feels about us.
4. Keep a positive outlook. This relationship is new for both of you. There will be all kinds of new experiences that arise because you are in this new relationship. If you look for the positive aspects of situations as they occur, you will keep yourself and your partner moving forward.

Mentoring activities

When both parties meet or make contact, some structure will be required to gain maximum benefit from each others time. As a minimum they should discuss:

- Progress on goals
- Obstacles to achieving goals
- Options to overcome the obstacles
- Other achievements
- Other issues impacting on the mentees progress and development
- Potential changes or further actions needed to achieve the goals

The mentor should be willing to provide open and honest feedback regarding progress on goals, including specific options for improvement of performance in relation to the goal.

Both parties should keep a summary of the meeting or conversation to help in future follow-up as well as organisational monitoring and evaluation processes.

Other activities may be undertaken to enhance the learning and development of the mentee. These may include:

- Visits to mentors workplace
- Involvement in mentors networks & networking activities
- Observation of the mentor or mentee in their workplace

Evaluation

This is a key activity required to measure the success of the mentoring program. It is important that the mentee identifies clear results associated with either achieving their program goals, or undertaking the mentoring program, along with any measurable benefits.

Results from each mentoring arrangement (Appendix 3) should be collated and used to report on progress towards meeting the strategic goals of both the organisation and the program

Mentoring program plan

Significant planning will be required to ensure that your mentoring program is a success. A pilot program (pg 10-11) is recommended to establish the value of a formalised mentoring program to your organisation.

Finding willing mentors from within NRM staff in the region may be a challenge, given their current workloads. Hence the benefits of being a mentor will need to be well promoted. Consideration should also be given to identifying how undertaking a mentoring role can be made to fit withing current job roles.

The pilot program outlined requires a nine month timeframe to plan, implement and evaluate the pilot mentoring program. This assumes that an existing staff member takes on the coordination of the program.

Pilot program outline

Identify goals for program

- Identify what you want the program to deliver
- Identify how the program could address the strategic aims of the organisation

Identify evaluation measures

- Identify data to collect from the pilot & how it relates to the mentoring program goals
- Include data that identifies the return on investment for the organisation

Develop business case

- Include issues to be addressed, goals to be achieved and potential ROI
- Identify budget required. May need to start on mentor system for 25% of staff across region as part of pilot

Develop staff selection process

- Staff to submit 'Expression of Interest' highlighting the goals they'd like to achieve & time they're prepared to commit to program

Mentor selection

- Identify core skills required
- Identify support that organisation can provide including training
- Identify people within organisation and external to organisation
- Develop EOI process for mentors

Match staff with mentors

- Base the 'match' on areas of expertise and experience of the mentor relative to the staff member
- Use geographic locations as a secondary criteria

Provide information & planning tools

- Review documentation including mentoring agreements & contact dates

Finalise agreements

- Mentee finalises goals, discusses with mentor
- 2nd 'face to face' meeting

Mentoring meetings

- Continue contact via meetings, email, webcam, teleconference & phone
- Record progress/results

Mid program review

- Forum with all program participants to discuss achievements, concerns, changes made, changes required, support required

Mentoring meetings

- Continue contact via meetings, email, webcam, teleconference & phone
- Record progress/results

Program review

- Final face to face meeting
- Identify & document achievements & ROI
- Review forum & evaluation
- Recommendations for future programs

APEN mentoring scheme

A guide for mentors and mentees

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How to Build a Successful Mentoring Program Using the Elements of Effective Practice™

MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership

1600 Duke Street, Suite 300, Alexandria, VA 22314

Web site: www.mentoring.org

Australian Mentor Centre

www.australianmentorcentre.com.au

Mentoring Works

www.mentoring-works.com

International Mentoring Association

www.mentoring-association.org

The Coaching & Mentoring Network

www.coachingnetwork.org.uk

The Mentoring Group

www.mentoringgroup.com

Who Mentored You

www.whomentoredyou.com

Leadership WA

Leadership Western Australia is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that facilitates leadership enhancement opportunities for high potential leaders.

<http://www.leadershipwa.org.au>

Appendix 1. Mentoring agreement template

The aim of the Mentoring Agreement is to document the:

- Protocols and procedures to be followed
- Agreed goals for the mentoring relationship
- Expectations of the mentor and mentee

Mentor and mentee must discuss and agree on the following before signing.

1. We are voluntarily entering into a mentoring relationship and agree that for its six month duration we will:

- Maintain confidentiality and respect the other’s privacy
- Be respectful, non-judgemental and supportive of each other
- Keep to scheduled meeting times or give adequate notice of changes
- Behave ethically and safely at all times
- Advise the Mentoring Program Coordinator of any issues or concerns

2. The following goals have been discussed and agreed.

Goal 1 (Professional skills development)

Goal 2: (Project or program delivery)

Goal 3: (Development of specific personal or technical skills)

3. We have discussed our workloads and availability throughout the coming six months. The mentoring arrangement will commence on/...../2009 and finish on/...../2009.

We have agreed on the following contact arrangements.

Contact Frequency

Fortnightly Monthly Other

Preferred Contact

Face to face Email Phone Other

We have agreed who will have primary responsibility for keeping in touch: Mentor Mentee

Next face-to-face meeting date and venue:

4. Although we will endeavour to complete the program, we understand that the relationship can be discontinued by either party on a no-fault basis if necessary.

We have read, understood and agree to these guidelines and procedures.

Mentee Signature _____

Print Name _____

Mentor Signature _____

Print Name _____

Mentees, please return a signed copy to the Mentoring Program Coordinator within 1 week of signing

Appendix 2. Mentee goal planning sheet

Goal 1. _____

My goal is to

Benefits to me are:

Benefits to my organisation, program or project are:

Current obstacles to achieving the goal	Options to overcome the obstacles

Action plan

Action	Due Date	Done?

Appendix 3. Goal review & measurement template

Goal: _____

Date achieved: _____

Changes made

-
-
-
-

Measurable benefits

-
-
-
-

Return on Investment (\$ value):

How did the mentoring arrangement contribute to achieving the goals set and level of ROI?

-
-
-
-
-