

Mentor Program Guidelines

Guidelines for Mentoring Program

Guidelines are required to ensure successful relationships with clear expectations of the mentee and mentor.

Mentoring is an important voluntary activity, critical to develop and nurture careers. A career mentor is someone who takes special interest in helping another develop a successful career. A mentor may guide the mentee on any number of career-related or personal development topics. Mentoring enables participants to benefit from the opportunity to share concerns and aspirations with someone experienced.

Mentoring is ideally a two-way professional relationship that develops over time, with each person asking questions, finding answers and making choices. Typically, it is 1-on-1 relationship between a more experienced and less experienced person. It is based upon encouragement, constructive comments, openness, mutual trust, respect and willingness to learn and share.

Mentors: The selection and appointment of appropriate mentors is essential for a successful program. Women in Business has invited mentors to participate in the program based on track record and skills/traits such as effective communication, positive relationships developed in a professional manner, tact, patience and diplomacy, good organisational skills and high level of commitment and enthusiasm to the program.

A **good mentor** is likely to have some or all of the following qualities:

- perceived as a role model;
- able to encourage and motivate others;
- interested in the learning process;
- able to maintain confidentiality;
- good knowledge about career paths; and/or
- good interpersonal skills, particularly listening

Mentor responsibilities

- Listening objectively, and acting as a sounding board, to the mentee's ideas, dreams, plans and problems.
- Asking questions that will encourage the mentee to explore issues from a variety of perspectives. Not prescriptive in advocating one way of thinking.
- Challenging the mentee's traditional ways of thinking and acting to try strategies that are outside their comfort zone.
- Facilitating the mentee's learning and developing and raising the bar in relation to her potential.
- Providing information, guidance, support, encouragement and constructive feedback.
- Facilitating problem-solving, decision making and strategic planning processes in relation to career matters.
- Maintaining confidentiality.

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Mentor vs Supervisor

One thing that sets mentors apart from supervisors is a desire to help the mentee develop into a successful professional with ***no more at stake in it than the personal satisfaction of helping someone grow***. Outside of giving you an objective perspective, mentors can help you set personal and professional goals and support you through honest feedback until you reach them.

The role of a mentor can benefit by:

- providing the opportunity to develop leadership capacity;
- providing structured support to help individuals define their own careers which will ultimately contribute to the effectiveness of workforce planning;
- career development; and
- succession planning.

The mentee's role

To make the most of the mentoring program, the mentee should plan to meet (or talk) regularly with the mentor (recommendation: every 4-6 weeks) and set that time to explore career issues and concerns. Keeping a list of questions as they arise can be a good way to begin conversations with your mentor. The mentor will encourage the mentee to go beyond the practical questions and develop a professional development plan. Ultimately, each mentee takes responsibility for her own growth and success, but the mentor can aid in exploring the best ways to accomplish this.

Mentee responsibilities

- Defining your learning needs & take responsibility for your plan of learning;
- Formulate smart objectives – time bound personal and career goals;
- Plan and implement strategies to achieve those objectives;
- Make decisions and take appropriate action;
- Identify how to measure progress and advancement;
- Keep commitments you make to your mentor
- Never insist on special favours that the mentor has not already offered;
- Listen carefully and heed your mentor's advice;
- Maintain confidentiality; and
- Give back as much as you get.

The mentoring relationship is strongest when each person asks for and gives feedback, when needs are articulated, and when confidentiality is maintained. As a learning relationship, the mentee should follow through on suggestions made by the mentor and show appreciation for the mentor's time and efforts.

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The Mentoring Relationship

The stages of the mentoring relationships are

- Exploring the possibility of working together;
- Building the relationship;
- Negotiating the mentoring arrangement/agreement;
- Mentee/mentor development, including measurement of progress and outcomes; and
- Ending the formal relationship.

The mentor and mentee should negotiate the 'operational' details of the mentoring relationship in the first few meetings.

Issues you may want to consider:

- When, where, how often, and long will the mentor and mentee meet?
Recommendation: every 4-6 weeks
- How formal or informal and how flexible will the mentor/mentee relationship be?
- What are the mentee's objectives for the mentoring relationship?
- What are the expectations and roles of the mentor and mentee?
- What issues and or tasks would the mentee like to explore with the mentor?
- What other activities would the mentee find useful?
- What kind and how much contact will the mentor and mentee have between meetings? i.e. phone/email
- How will the mentor/mentee keep the relationship going if either party is away or if the meeting has been cancelled or rescheduled?
- What are the confidentiality agreements?

Effective mentoring can occur informally or as formally as you chose but time together should be planned and maintained building a climate of trust. The mentor achieves this by asking open-ended questions and listening carefully.

It is important initially to find common ground and understand perceptions and goals. The mentor needs to have accurate and sufficient knowledge of the mentee to be able to offer assistance. The mentor should ask questions to learn details about the mentees background and career goals using facts as the basis of the decision-making process.

The mentor can assist the mentee in considering various career options. Strategies could include asking about reasons for choices and thinking creatively about alternative means of accomplishing goals.

In developing the relationship, the mentor can be useful in helping the mentee identify unproductive avenues and take steps toward changing them. A mentor can also serve as a role model. By occasionally telling her own story, then the mentor can motivate the mentee to take risks and make decisions without certainty of successful results (making independent choices). The conversations could also include learning from difficult experiences and developing the qualities needed to persist in a goal.

Both parties should agree on the negotiated plan of action. The time commitment and time frames need to be made clear and agreed upon - this will avoid disappointment.

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What if the relationship isn't working!

Occasionally mentoring relationships are not successful. When it comes to finding a mentor, perfection is not even a relevant concept. Nobody has the same career, so you are not going to find someone who is a perfect match. If this is the case, the mentor and the mentee have the right to end the mentoring relationship.

Getting started

Often the hardest step for mentees is getting things started.

The initial meeting

	Mentor's role	Mentee's role
<i>Come prepared</i>	Learn whatever you can about the mentee before your initial meeting.	Same
<i>Talk about the big picture</i>	Recount your own mentoring experiences to your mentee. Explain what worked and what didn't.	Listen and ask questions.
<i>Discuss the mentees needs</i>	Ask questions and listen.	Explain where you are and where you would like to be – and how mentoring might help.
<i>Seek mutual agreement on goal and expectations</i>	Explain what you can and what you cannot do.	"This is what I hope to achieve through this mentoring relationship."
<i>Seek agreement on responsibilities</i>	"I will do x."	"And I agree to do x."
<i>Set a timetable</i>	"Let's work on this for three months. Then we'll review progress and determine if we should continue."	Same.
<i>Agree on meeting times and who will set them</i>	"Check my calendar for suitable times."	"I will take responsibility for finding dates and times that fit into your schedule."
<i>Insist on confidentiality</i>	"Nothing we discuss will go outside this room unless we both agree otherwise."	Same.
<i>Agree to be candid</i>	"If this relationship isn't producing the results you expect, or if you disagree with my advice, say so. Neither of us has time to waste."	"I will tell you if this relationship isn't working for me. I won't waste your time."

Source: *Becoming an Effective Mentor: And a Receptive Protégé, Coaching and Mentoring: How to Develop Top Talent and Achieve Stronger Performance* (2006), Harvard Business School Press, Boston Massachusetts.

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Useful questions in the beginning and continuing conversations.

Problem solving

What do you think about this idea?

What do you think is important?

How would you solve this?

If you were in my shoes, what would you do?

What other factors should we be considering?

Is this approach going to work?

What do you see as the obstacles we face?

General

How are things going?

What are your goals?

What are you trying to accomplish?

Problem identification

What results have you achieved so far?

Where are you stuck?

What kinds of problems are you encountering?

Why do you think that happened?

Options and solutions

What solutions have you attempted?

What do you see as your options?

Do you want input or suggestions from me?

Planning

What is your favourite go forward plan?

How can you apply what you've learned to this situation?

Who else would benefit from knowing this?

Support

What can I do to support you in this?

Whose support do you need?

Would it be helpful to talk about this again?

Should you have any concerns through the program please contact the Griffith Women in Business Executive Committee – griffithwomeninbusiness@gmail.com