

Skilling SA Mentee Guide

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**Government
of South Australia**

Office of the Commissioner
for Public Sector Employment

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Introduction - Welcome to the Skilling SA Mentoring Program

The Mentoring Program (the program) aims to create partnerships outside of the normal work relationship. It involves mentors from within the SA public sector sharing their knowledge, skills and experience with you, the new trainee or graduate, and having a positive influence on your professional career.

The primary role of a mentor is enhance your career and capability development, develop your personal problem solving and decision making, enhance the connections built in mentoring partnerships and provide guidance and support based on your unique personality and circumstances. The mentor is not there to provide instructions or “the answers”, rather to guide you towards “the answer” that is right for you.

The program is a development opportunity for you and the mentor, an opportunity to share experiences. Your professional development and networks can be enhanced by the support of a mentor.

About mentoring

Benefits of mentoring

Mentees experience both professional and personal benefits that can include:

- a personalised professional development opportunity
- insight into working in the SA public sector and organisational expectations
- development of practical skills through information sharing
- access to networking opportunities
- additional supports during times of change, transition and learning
- the opportunity for impartial feedback and constructive criticism.

What is a mentor?

Defining a mentor is not easy as your mentor's role may vary throughout the relationship. However, your mentor's primary role is to provide guidance and support tailored to your circumstances and personality and aligned to your career development goals.

Your mentor should be able to:

- uphold the [South Australian Public Sector Values](#)
- employ active listening skills and build a trusting partnership
- offer encouragement through genuine positive reinforcement
- provide tools and strategies to make informed choices and decisions
- be a positive role model
- share "lessons learned" from their own experiences
- be a resource and a sounding board
- contribute to the professional development of your mentee
- provide support and guidance to your mentee to navigate the workplace
- be accessible, committed and engaged during the program
- maintain confidentiality of information shared by your mentee
- share and support networking opportunities.

Comparing the roles of mentor, supervisor, counsellor and coach

Mentors are often confused with coaches, counsellors and supervisors, however, each of these have distinctive differences in purpose and power relationship to the mentee. In a workplace context a mentor does not have any direct authority or influence over a mentees' work or job tasks, this is the role of a supervisor. Supervisors are responsible for managing workplace issues, such as relationships with others at work.

Mentees will always have a supervisor and a mentor but may also have other people in their workplaces and personal lives that take on the roles of counsellor and coach. Whilst you may find yourself having personal conversations with your mentor, the mentor does not have responsibility for professional counselling. Personal matters should be referred to appropriate services e.g., each government agency employee assistance programs, that you can access for professional assistance where needed.

The table below sets out differences between each relationship.

Mentor	Supervisor	Counsellor	Coach
Informal relationship	Formal relationship	Formal relationship	Informal or formal relationship
Agenda set by the mentee	Agenda set by supervisor	Collaborative agenda	Collaborative agenda
Focuses on general professional/personal development	Focuses on work performance	Focuses on personal issues	Focuses on skill development
Semi-structured relationship	Structured relationship with clear boundaries	Structured relationship with clear boundaries	Can be structured or semi-structured
Provides open communication	Can be open and closed communication	Collaborative communication	Open communication
Identifies and supports growth opportunities	Identifies any performance issues and professional development	Identifies underlying personality or behavioural issues	Identifies strengths and weaknesses
Provides general, objective advice and supports	Provides formal advice and directives	Provides formal professional advice	Provides general advice and supports

How to prepare

Take some time to self-reflect on what you want out of this experience. Possible questions to assist you in starting this process are:

- what were the most important lessons learned from your past experiences? (e.g., part time work, study)
- have you participated in mentoring before? What worked and didn't in that relationship?
- what do you want from the experience?
- how will you know when the mentoring is working or not working?

Consider the following:

- past experiences – both the good and the bad
- goals
- successful people and how they got to where they are
- change – in the industry, in the company, etc.
- the future – for the organization, the industry, etc.
- learning – how do you learn best?

Planning

Planning will set up your mentoring partnership for success.

It is expected that you will meet with your mentor approximately once a month for an hour, for the duration of the program, however, you may choose to meet more regularly or use other means of regular contact including, Microsoft Teams, e-mail and phone. The location could be formal or informal, for example a coffee shop or a meeting room. Mix up the types of meetings you have. Don't make them all formal, have coffee, try different venues, locations. Remember, make the mentoring process fun and enjoyable.

Meeting guide

Below is a guide of what to cover in the first and subsequent meetings. Consider this, along with your goals and the best way to meet them.

Meeting 1

In the first meeting, set the expectations of the mentoring partnership. Aim to cover:

- introductions/Getting to know each other/icebreakers
- discussion about each of your careers, skills, abilities and interests
- mentor to explain their role and how they can support you
- explore what you would like to get out of the program
- discuss regularity of meetings and best days/times/locations
- agree on the details for the next meeting.

Meeting 2 and onwards

Subsequent meeting discussions may cover:

- What achievements or 'wins' have you both experienced since the last meeting?
- Following the last meeting, was anything put into place or tried out? How successful was it? What was learnt? Have you both undertaken any agreed strategies set from the last meeting?
- How you both feel things are progressing - Are there any adjustments to your meetings that need to be made? For example, communication methods/ how you work together / are there areas for improvement?
- Is there any specific information that would be beneficial to either the mentor or mentee? Are there any connections or networks that would be beneficial? The mentor or mentee can introduce each other to other professionals where relevant.
- What are the goals and strategies for the next meeting/s?
- When and where will you meet next?

Final Meeting

Recap the partnership and discuss plans moving forward, including potentially keeping in touch with one another.

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