

# Mentor Guide



## INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on choosing to become a mentor. The mentor program aims to create partnerships outside of the normal work relationship. Sharing your knowledge, skills and experience with a new trainee or graduate is a privileged position where you can have a positive influence on a person's professional career.

The mentor relationship assists your mentee(s) to navigate working in the public sector as well as support them to develop and enhance their skills, performance, learning, professional networking and overall development.

***"Mentoring is to support and encourage people to manage their own learning in order that they may maximise their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be."***

—Eric Parsloe, the Oxford School of Coaching & Mentoring.

## WHAT IS A MENTOR?

Defining a mentor is not easy as your role will vary throughout the relationship. However, your primary role as a mentor is to provide guidance and support based on the unique personality and circumstance of your mentee(s).

The mentor is not there to provide instructions or 'the answers', but to guide the mentee towards 'the answer' that is right for them. Being a mentor is not the same as being a friend. The objective is to provide guidance to your mentee during their trainee/graduate program.

As a mentor you have experience and knowledge to share and assist mentees to develop their professional capacity and personal problem solving and decision-making skills.

As a Mentor you should be able to:

- uphold the values and ethics of the public sector
- explain the basic mechanics of government
- support the public sector and agency's mission, vision, and goals
- employ active listening skills
- 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 your own experiences
- be a resource and a sounding board

- contribute to the professional development of your mentee(s)
- provide support and guidance to your mentee(s) to navigate the workplace
- be accessible, committed and engaged during the program

It is also important to know the difference between a mentor and counsellor. Whilst you may find yourself having personal conversations with your mentee(s), you shouldn't take the responsibility for professional counselling. Each government agency, and the public sector as a whole, have many support services, including the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and professional partners that you can refer your mentee for professional assistance where needed.

Mentors are often confused with coaches, counsellors and supervisors, however, each of these have distinctive differences in purpose and power relationship to the mentee. 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.

In a workplace context a mentor does not have any direct authority or influence over a mentees work or job tasks.

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

To make the most of mentoring conversations mentors are encouraged to ask questions that guide the mentees to move from where they are now, to where they would like to be. You can share your experiences to reflect on how you developed your goals and gained achievements, which allows your mentee to learn from your experiences that will influence their future.

## BENEFITS OF MENTORING

### *ORGANISATIONAL BENEFITS*

Mentoring can contribute to employee motivation, job performance and importantly retention rates. Mentoring has been associated with professional development, increased productivity and career advancement, this includes:

- promotion of organisational investment in professional growth and leadership
- increased employee satisfaction and performance
- increased engagement and retention of staff
- increased opportunities for work and personal reflection

### *BENEFITS OF MENTORING – FOR THE MENTOR*

There are many benefits to being a mentor ranging from formal and professional development to personal benefits to the individuals involved. As a mentor you can:

- enhance your skills in areas such as leadership, interpersonal skills and communication
- increase your professional networks
- hear fresh perspectives from future members of your profession
- have the opportunity to reflect on your own practice

### *BENEFITS OF MENTORING – FOR THE MENTEES*

Mentees experience both professional and personal benefits that can include:

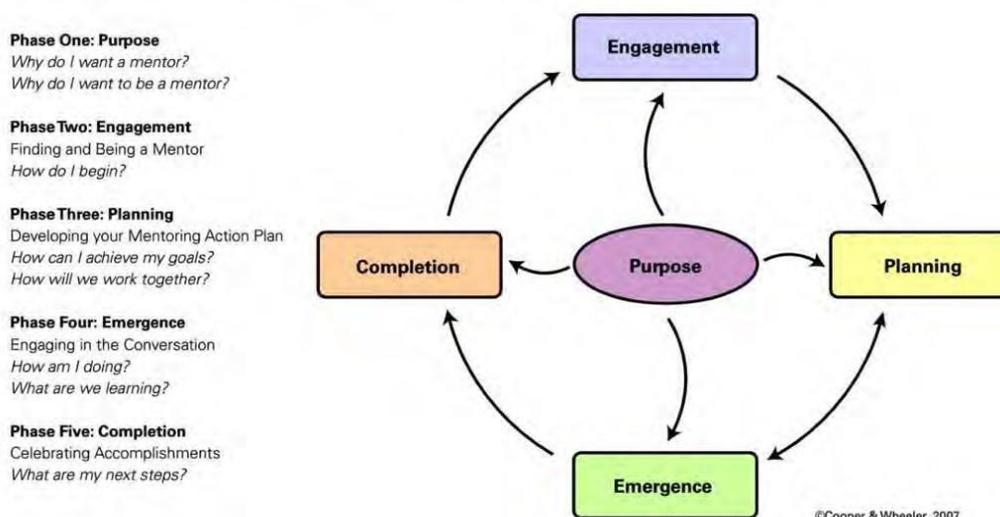
- A personalised professional development opportunity
- An insight into working in the public sector and organisation expectations
- Development of practical skills through information sharing
- Increased access to professional development and networking opportunities
- Additional supports during time of change, transition and learning
- The opportunity for impartial feedback and constructive criticism

## SUCCESSFUL MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

There are many keys to successful mentoring, however, the true successes of mentoring are demonstrated through the relationship developed between mentor and mentee. Like all relationships, the mentor relationship requires thought, planning, time and care. Cooper and Wheeler (2007)<sup>1</sup>, identified three key ingredients for successful mentor relationships: understanding the **why** of the relationship, understanding **how**, and then committing to it.

From the three key ingredients the Five-Phase Mentoring Relationship was developed.

### Five-Phase Mentoring Relationship Model



- **Engagement** focuses on how one finds or becomes a mentor, either formally or informally. The mentor and mentee will determine the nature of the relationship to meet learning needs, objectives and mutual goals.
- **Planning** concentrates on the development of an action plan, including goals, actions, resources, timelines and how to evaluate success. This is also the phase where the terms of the relationship are negotiated and agreed upon.
- **Emergence** sees the evolution of the mentoring relationship. The goals are clear, a plan is in place and the mentor facilitates the growth and development of the mentee by supporting, encouraging and challenging. This is an interactive process as it flows through engagement in conversation, reflection and evaluation.
- **Completion** phase is a time for celebrating accomplishments, redefining the relationship and examining what your next steps will be. This is the time where the relationships becomes more collegial and collaborative.

<sup>1</sup>Cooper and Wheeler, 2007, Building successful mentoring relationships, URL: <http://fly.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Cooper%20and%20Wheeler%202007%20Mentoring%20Relationship.pdf>

## GROUP DEVELOPMENT

As a mentor in this program you will have a group of up to 3 mentees. As a mentor it is important to set the expectations, tone and standards for the mentor group. Developing the group dynamics and norms will allow relationships to build more cohesively between mentor and mentee as well as between mentees. Establishing a group that is open, transparent, cohesive and supportive allows for discussion to promote trust and development.

### DEVELOPING GROUP NORMS

As a mentor you are the facilitator of the group. It is important to distinguish between a leader and a facilitator in the initial stages of group formation. Guiding the mentor group at the first meeting, to determine and establish group norms, will set the dynamics of all future meetings and create and build on an environment of openness and trust. By allowing group members to determine what are acceptable behaviours for the group allows each individual to take ownership of their behaviours and consider agreed behaviours as norms rather than rules.

There are many ways to develop norms within groups, however, it is important to ensure some basic categories are discussed when determining those norms. These include:

CATEGORY	QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER
<b>Collaboration</b>	How will we respect individual thoughts and opinions? How will we ensure we work collaboratively?
<b>Participation</b>	How will we ensure everyone's participation? How will we support each other to participate?
<b>Decision-making</b>	How will we reach consensus for each decision? How will we deal with conflict?
<b>Dialogue</b>	How will we ensure we have open and respectful communication?
<b>Agenda</b>	Who will set outlines for meetings? Who will we set limits for each topic?
<b>Confidentiality</b>	How will we create an open and trusting environment?
<b>Listening</b>	How will we encourage active listening? How will we manage situations where listening is challenged?
<b>Expectations</b>	How will we monitor adherence to our group norms? What will we expect from each other?

## MENTOR MEETINGS

It is expected that you meet with your mentees between 6-10 times a year, for approximately one hour, however, you may choose to meet more regularly or use other means of regular contact including e-mail and phone.

The location could be formal or informal, for example a coffee shop, a break out area or the mentee or mentor workplace. Meeting topics that are detailed in the Mentor Plan can be grouped together. A review and celebration may be a positive way to end the mentoring arrangement.

## SUGGESTED TOPICS

- working within the South Australian Public Sector and the mechanics of government
  - *including Parliament, Cabinet, understanding your agency and business protocols and procedures*
- public sector ethics, values
- performance management and development
- workplace communication
- goal setting, problem solving, critical thinking
- managing workloads, time management, and conflict management
- career planning
- networking
- professional conversations

## SETTING THE EXPECTATION

In the first meeting it is important to keep it casual, but also to set the expectations of the mentor relationship. Some mentees will be very open and forthcoming with who they are, and what they hope to gain from mentoring, whilst others may be more reserved and need you to prompt them to start the conversation.

### Discussion topics

Introduce yourself and welcome them, introductions of mentees, agency, background, qualification etc.

- Give them a short history of your experience, values and purpose.
- What are your goals for the program? What opportunities are there?
- Explain your role and how you can support them
- Ask your mentee what they think mentoring is about?

- Ask what they hope to gain from the program?
- Take an interest and acknowledge what they bring to the workplace (prior experience)
- Remember to be mindful of confidentiality, especially when talking about your agency

## STARTING CONVERSATIONS

### Questioning: A key mentoring technique

Mentors use questions to help mentees to identify and describe problems and situations, reflect on their feelings, assumptions and beliefs; identify alternatives and options; and develop self-awareness and new understandings about themselves.

Effective mentors are those people who ask questions that require their mentee to:

- Provide objective/factual feedback/answers
- Reflect on their feelings and ideas
- Interpret issues and therefore, identify meanings and significance
- Make informed decisions based on a range of factors

Conversations between mentors and mentees should be planned and a large part of the planning is to prepare well-constructed questions to ask mentees (Stanfield, 2000).

According to Stanfield (2000), there are four levels of questions:

1. **Objective level** — questions based on facts and data and viewed as ‘external’ to the mind. These are seen as ‘what’ questions.
  - Where are you up to?
  - What work have you done since I saw you last?
  - Who have you been working with?
  - What have you achieved since we talked last?
  - What are your observations?
2. **Reflective level** — questions that invite personal reaction to the data/facts presented. Sometimes the responses can be based on feelings. Questions viewed here are considered ‘internal’ — questions that relate to ‘gut feelings’.

- What has been the response of others to the work you have done?
- What have you enjoyed doing the most?
- What have you enjoyed doing the least?
- How are you feeling about things now?
- What surprised you?

3. **Interpretive level** — questions that draw out meanings, values, beliefs and the significance of the issue. Questions here are concerned with: ‘what does this mean?’; ‘why’? These questions are often referred to as ‘so what’ questions.

- What have you learned about yourself, others, so far?
- What are some issues you continue to worry about? Why?
- What alternatives are you thinking about for dealing with challenges?
- What makes x important?
- What might be the impact of ...?

4. **Decisional level** — questions that provoke resolution, new directions and actions. This is where the conversation is brought to a close and decisions are made — sometimes referred to as ‘now what’ questions:

- What are you going to do next?
- What is your plan and how are you going to achieve it?
- Can I help and if so how?
- Are things moving in the right direction for you?
- What can you do differently in the future?
- What have you learned from this?

## Example of a Mentor Plan

### Meeting 1

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#### Suggested Plan:

- Informal session - Introductions/Getting to know each other/Ice-breakers
- Discussion about mentor's career and learnings, and trainees/graduates' backgrounds
- Discuss suggested meeting dates/times for the program
- Mentor to explain their role and how they can support the mentees
- Mentees to discuss what they would like to get out of this process
- Mentor to provide a brief introduction to the SA Government and working in the SA Public Sector (further discussed in Meeting 2 depending on time)

*Before next meeting* – Mentees to come back with a couple points about what their agencies do generally, and the role of their specific teams. Also ask mentees to locate their agency's organisational charts.

### Meeting 2

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#### Suggested Plan:

- Mentees to discuss the role of their agencies and how their team supports the objectives of the agency, and discuss organisational charts
- Introduction to goal-setting – e.g SMART principle and some general discussion about how mentor and mentees have achieved their goals to date

*Before next meeting* – Ask mentees to identify 1 goal they want to achieve this year in their workplaces and be ready at the next meeting to describe how they will achieve it.

## Meeting 3

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### Suggested Plan:

- Discuss each mentee's goals for the year and their strategies/plans for achieving them
- Have a general discussion about facing challenges and problem solving – what challenges have the mentees faced (even non work-related) and what did they learn from them?
- Mentor to provide some tips around performance development and training opportunities – are mentees aware of any opportunities available in their agency/across Government? If not, ask them to look into training courses they may be interested in

## Meeting 4

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### Suggested Plan:

- Free choice of discussion (less-formal)
- Use this opportunity to discuss how mentees have been travelling, what do they think of the mentor process so far, does anything need to change?
- Mentor to discuss a current topic of interest/something in the media relating to SA Government (i.e. bring in an article or discuss something in the news)

## Meeting 5

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### Suggested Plan:

- Discuss Ministerial/Cabinet Briefings and other formal written communication required in Govt – what sort of written communication does each mentee deal with in their workplaces?
- Discuss email communication and share any tips for the effective use of Outlook (i.e. efficient ways for dealing with multiple emails, calendar tips)
- Inform mentees that they will host and run the next 3-4 meetings.

*Before next meeting* – ask mentees to prepare a short 3-5 minute presentation about something they have been working on or something about the SA Public Sector generally.

## Meeting 6

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### Suggested Plan:

- Mentee to chair
- Run through each mentee's presentation
- Get mentees to give feedback to each other
- Mentor to discuss effective feedback techniques (i.e. how to give effective feedback, how to deal with negative feedback) – mentees to discuss their own experiences giving/receiving feedback

*Before next meeting* - mentees to assess positive and negative work practices, and any unwritten rules in their workplaces.

## Meeting 7

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### Suggested Plan:

- Mentee to chair
- Discussion on positive/negative work practices and unwritten workplace rules
- Discussion on time management/organisation skills – mentor to provide some tips, mentees and mentor to discuss how they currently deal with demanding workloads

*Before next meeting* – If mentor/mentees have LinkedIn, get them to look up each other (and add each other's profiles if they wish).

## Meeting 8

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### Suggested Plan:

- Mentee to chair
- Discussion on networking and LinkedIn
- Mentor to introduce the “elevator pitch” – mentees to prepare their own elevator pitch during the meeting and share it with each other (refer to page 16 for more information)

*Before next meeting* - Mentees to find a job advertised on [iworkforsa.gov.au](http://iworkforsa.gov.au) or [seek.com.au](http://seek.com.au) before next meeting (relevant to their role or agency if possible). They need to consider the Job & Person specification requirements, as well as the process for applying.

## Meeting 9

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### Suggested Plan:

- Discussion on techniques/tips for applying for jobs and the recruitment process
- Mentees to share the job ad they located and discuss how they would apply for the particular role
- Mentor to share some tips on answering behavioural-type questions in job applications and/or job interviews

## Meeting 10

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*Informal – 1.5 hours – mentor to arrange lunch or group to decide*

### Suggested Plan:

- Recap of key parts of the year and have a chat about plans moving forward
- Discuss potentially keeping in touch with one another

## Additional Points

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- Mentors should also aim to call each mentee twice during the duration of the mentor calendar to check in with them. Aim for one call in the first 3 months and another in the last 3 months.
- Remember to acknowledge and celebrate any major or minor achievements that have been shared by members of the group (mentees or mentor).
- Mix up the types of meetings you have. Don't make them all formal, have coffee, go to lunch, try different venues, locations.
- Make the mentoring process fun and enjoyable.
- The topics are a guide only. Try to focus on everyone's goals and the best way to meet them.

## CRITERIA FOR EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

The mentor has an important role in providing feedback and context to mentees, in addition to the formal and informal feedback provided by a supervisor. The following are 10 criteria for effective feedback.

	<b>EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK</b>
1	Describes the behaviour which led to the feedback- 'You are finishing my sentences for me...'
2	Comes as soon as appropriate after the behaviour - immediately if possible, later if events make that necessary (something important is going on, you need time to cool down etc.)
3	Is direct, from sender to receiver.
4	Is owned by the sender, who uses 'I' messages and takes responsibility for their thoughts, feelings, reactions.
5	Includes the senders real feelings about the behaviour, insofar as they are relevant to the feedback - 'I get frustrated when I'm trying to make a point and you keep finishing my sentences.'
6	Is checked for clarity, to see that the receiver fully understands what's being conveyed.
7	Asks relevant questions which seek information, with the receiver knowing why the information is sought and having a clear sense that the sender does not know the answer.
8	Specifies consequences of the behaviour - present and/or future- 'If you keep finishing my sentences I won't want to spend much time talking to you in the future'.
9	Is solicited or at least, to some extent, desired by the receiver.
10	Refers to behaviours about which the receiver can do something, if they want to.

## GOAL SETTING

To assist with goal setting, discussion and use of the different approaches may be useful, including the SMART model.

### SMART PRINCIPLE

The acronym SMART has a number of slightly different variations which can be used as a tool for goal setting:

#### *Specific*

- Well defined
- Clear to anyone reading it

#### *Measurable*

- Know if the goal is obtainable and how far away completion is
- Know when it has been achieved

#### *Achievable*

- Agreement with all the stakeholders what the goals should be

#### *Realistic*

- Within the availability of resources, knowledge and time

#### *Time Based*

- Enough time to achieve the goal
- Not too much time, that can affect motivation or performance

### ACTIVITY - DEVELOPING A SMART GOAL

**Direction** – using the SMART principle guide your mentee through the process of setting and analysing a career goal or objective. A goal might be to gain further skills to move into a new position. Therefore, you would work out a plan using the SMART model.

Example: Moving towards a Project Officer position:

<b>S</b>	I need to complete a course on project management to further my career
<b>M</b>	I could work with the project team in our business unit for one or two days a week, whilst studying so that I can apply my studies to the workplace. This would also assist with my assignments.
<b>A</b>	This will require a Performance Management meeting with my manager to discuss any available opportunities to undertake the course through work or through the study / leave policy and time to attend has been agreed.
<b>R</b>	I will be required to prove the relevance to my current job, in order for my manager to support me to do the course. If I had skills in project management, I would be able to assist the project team and take on small projects myself for the business unit.
<b>T</b>	This course needs to be approved, started and completed this year.

## NETWORKING

As a mentor, you will be providing your mentees with support around the development of professional networks, including the development of an elevator pitch.

### ELEVATOR PITCH

#### What is an "elevator pitch"?

An "elevator pitch" is a concise, carefully planned, and well-practiced marketing message about your professional self that should be easy to understand and be able to be delivered in the time it would take to ride up an elevator.

It forces you to understand what your primary skill sets are and what makes you valuable.

#### Where to use your elevator pitch?

Professionally, an elevator pitch has multiple uses.

Most commonly it is used in networking events and as an introduction in resumes. Its purpose is to gain interest in you to prompt further conversation that can be more detailed.

- in an interview, in response to, "Tell me about yourself."
- team meetings, project work, introduction with stakeholders
- in a follow-up phone call or email, to summarise your qualifications and interest
- while networking, to help you make a clear, positive first impression
- at career/employment events/expos, to introduce yourself quickly to employers

#### Creating your elevator pitch:

- Keep your pitch simple and brief, and always include who you are, what you want to do and why it matters (or what the employer/client will get out of it)
- Use a short story or example to demonstrate your best qualities or what your key message is
- Use strong, action-packed words and speak in a confident, personable tone. Avoid jargon and acronyms
- Be relevant. List the accomplishments (work, skills, objectives, and education or life experiences) that are relevant and compelling to your audience
- If job searching, be clear about the job title, function and industry you are interested in
- Practice your pitch, but don't memorise to repeat verbatim every time, you want to sound natural!
- Make a connection between yourself and your new acquaintance. End with a question to draw the contact into the conversation.

## 5 simple rules:

- Identify your goal
- Explain what you do
- Communicate your unique selling point
- Engage with a question
- Put it all together and practice

## CAREER PLANNING

You can assist your mentee to develop their career aspirations and future plans.

As a mentor you can guide your mentee(s) through self- assessment checklists to assist with identifying their interests, skills and future opportunities.

### ACTIVITY - DEVELOPING A CAREER ACTION PLAN

**Directions** – explain the importance of career planning to your mentee.

Career planning is an ongoing process that can help manage learning and development.

Career planning is the continuous process of:

- thinking about your interests, values, skills and preferences
- exploring the life, work and learning options available to you
- ensuring that your work fits with your personal objectives and circumstances
- continuously updating your work and learning plans to help you manage changes in your home life and work situations

### The career planning process has four steps:

- Knowing yourself
- Researching employers and roles
- Making decisions
- Taking action

### Getting started

Begin by asking yourself the following questions:

- Where am I at now?
- Where do I want to be?
- What do I want out of a job or career?
- What do I like to do?
- What are my strengths?
- What is important to me?
- What skills do I need?
- Where is the work?

If you have any queries, please contact the Skilling SA Team at [OCPSEskillingSA@sa.gov.au](mailto:OCPSEskillingSA@sa.gov.au)



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