



CHAPTER MENTORING PROGRAM

CHAPTER EDUCATION TOOLBOX

All great leaders have benefited from the guidance of at least one, if not many, mentors over the course of their careers. Notable examples include Martin Luther King, Helen Keller, Kareem Abdul Jabbar, and Warren Buffett. An organization like APWA, which has a focus on the professional development of its members, has a veritable obligation to provide not just training but also mentoring to its members—particularly to those in the early stages of their careers. While a good deal of mentoring often takes place in the workplace, it may be limited in very large or very small organizations and is often specific to the work, not providing much guidance for career development, leadership skills, or broader technical abilities. Accordingly, APWA encourages each chapter and branch to develop a mechanism to connect mentors with mentees.

Just as mentees develop talents more readily by following the practice of an experienced mentor, a chapter mentorship program can best be managed by following the example of successful programs in other chapters. The information in this toolbox was developed from proven programs created by other chapters. While every detail may not suit your chapter, this toolbox provides guidelines and other resources on mentoring with which to fashion an effective mentorship program.

SUMMARY STEPS FOR CHAPTER ACTION

- 1) Confirm chapter commitment to creating and continuing to foster the Mentoring Program (may include funding, administrative resource support, prompt oversight and replies to inquiries, chapter program time, and affirmation of participants).
- 2) Establish program goals and parameters, e.g., duration of the program, focus of guidance activities, numbers of participants, frequency of interactions, dispute resolution, criteria for completion, mechanisms for promoting program and recognizing participants. (This step may be deferred until after selection of Steering Committee and/or participants.)
- 3) Select program Steering Committee, particularly one or two individuals to serve as program champions to manage mentor-mentee interactions, ensure adherence to chapter guidelines, promote mentorship activities, and identify/recruit future participants.
- 4) Identify and seek consent of potential mentors, potential mentees, and establish a format for ultimate selection of “teams.”
- 5) Establish mentor/mentee “teams,” and kick off the program with appropriate fanfare to chapter membership, participant employers, etc.
- 6) Provide continuing program support to ensure ongoing participation by members.

HOW TO START A CHAPTER MENTORING PROGRAM

One universal component in a successful mentoring program is having a passionate champion to lead the effort. Committees are fine, but ultimately there will be one or two individuals (champion) who keep the flame alive, overcome any obstacles that arise, and have the passion to engage others—both mentors and mentees—to get the program up and running and sustain it over the years.

The champion must understand the benefits and objectives of mentoring and be familiar enough with the chapter membership to recommend and involve key players—particularly, the mentors. Past presidents might be good candidates to lead the mentorship program because of their familiarity with chapter resources and their known dedication to the chapter.

Links to examples of successful mentoring programs from other chapters are included in this document. It is recommended that you reach out to at least one of these programs to gain insight into the level of effort required and possible pitfalls of a program.

To start your chapter program, identify members of your chapter who would be suitable mentors. They should have enough experience and career advancement to effectively guide others. Select people with a range of backgrounds and possibly identify some who could be involved for a specific need that arises, such as asset management or resiliency. Make sure to have enough willing participants to be able to select the most appropriate mentor for each mentee. Use these potential mentors as a “brain trust” for your mentorship program and have them help set the initial parameters. Be sure to offer support and resources to those mentors that agree to serve in the role.

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HOW TO START A CHAPTER MENTORING PROGRAM (CONTINUED)

Some decisions this group can help decide are:

- o Who are the people you wish to serve with this program?
- o Who will lead and manage the program?
- o How will the mentors and mentees be matched?
- o How shall mentees be involved in the final selection of a mentor?
- o How will expenses be met?
- o Will the nature of assistance to be provided be specific (i.e., technical skill related, growth related, leadership related) or open-ended?
 - Or should such determinations be made by the mentor and mentee for their specific circumstance?
- o Should an assignment run for a specific period, like one year, or be open-ended?
- o When should program assignments begin? At a specific time, like the annual meeting, or could it occur anytime?
- o What information needs to be included in the biographical sketch for mentors and mentees? Where will that form be filed?
- o How will confidentiality be preserved?
- o What frequency of face-to-face meetings should be specified?
- o Will this be members-only or open to all public works personnel?
- o How will mentor-mentee relationships be dissolved?

When these basic details are worked out, prepare guidance documents for the program and reach out to potential mentees with a description of the program, being clear about the level of responsibility expected from both mentor and mentee.

Other items for consideration when developing your mentorship program are:

Potential Mentee Candidates

- Public Works Institute attendees and graduates
- Emerging Leaders Academy class members and graduates
- Young Professional members
- New members
- Conference first-time attendees
- Student chapter members
- APWA certification candidates and graduates
- APWA internship program members

Potential Areas of Mentorship

- Leadership skills (developing others, managing change, setting strategy, decision-making, etc.)
- Technical or functional skills (enhancing job performance)
- Business skills (analyzing needs, grant writing, proposing solutions, CIP budget management, driving results, project planning, thinking globally, etc.)
- Career guidance (career planning, career growth strategy)
- Industry knowledge (sector changes and trends)
- Project input (specific situational need)
- Technology literacy (awareness of technologies, using tech effectively)
- APWA Certifications

Duration of Mentoring Relationship

Common mentor-mentee relationships involve an initial face-to-face or online virtual meeting, and subsequent approximately monthly or weekly interactions by phone or other electronic means totaling one to two hours per month. Duration and communication expectations should be agreed upon at the beginning of the relationship. Duration may be one year, or upon completion of an agreed-upon set of criteria. All is subject to modification, including the following:

- Long-term connection with mentor
- One-time group conversations with multiple advisors/experts to gain perspectives
- Help with a specific project
- Cross-functional with same position
- Peer-to-peer exchange

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MENTOR AND MENTEE DO'S AND DON'TS

The following are some things that mentors and mentees should **DO** in the mentoring relationship:

DO

- Review the other party's biographical sketch to be familiar with their strengths and interests.
- Work on developing a close bond with each other that is rooted in trust and respect.
- Be reliable. Make every effort to show up for scheduled meetings and give your partner ample advance warning if you need to reschedule.
- Focus on the mentee's needs and goals, not the mentor's. It is critically important for both parties to have a clear understanding of the specific goals of the relationship, and to communicate clearly at every step.
- Identify the mentee's strengths and help him or her learn how to use them.
- Teach your mentee to learn from his or her setbacks.
- Engage the opinion of your mentee when making decisions.
- Mentors should share your experiences and knowledge when applicable.
- Respect the mentee's culture, perspective and life circumstances when guiding his or her life decisions.
- Have an agenda or activities in mind before meeting with your mentee.
- Encourage and praise, but also be honest and sincere.
- Emphasize the positive and be enthusiastic.
- Respect your mentee's choices and privacy.
- Identify some external resources (books, articles, videos, podcasts, etc.) that could help guide the mentee on his/her selected path.

DON'T

- Expect to bond immediately. It takes time.
- Adopt an authoritative tone.
- Be judgmental or impose values inconsistent with the mentee's life circumstances or beliefs.
- Make promises you may not keep.
- Be too accommodating just to be liked. It is important to teach your mentee responsibility and commitment.
- Violate confidentiality except where crisis intervention is necessary.
- Be afraid to admit when you are wrong or uncertain. Learning together can strengthen a relationship.
- Be all business and no fun.
- Take it personally if a mentee does not always heed your advice.

Adapted from <https://mentorprize.org/index.php/be-a-mentor/dos-and-donts/>

Hopefully, the information presented in this toolbox will provide you with resources needed to build, grow, and nurture a vibrant chapter mentorship program. Good luck with developing your program.

RESOURCES

- [APWA Northwest Public Works Institute Mentorship Program Handbook](#)
- [APWA San Diego Chapter Young Professionals Mentorship Program](#)
- [APWA Southern California Chapter Mentorship Program](#)

MENTEE DO'S AND DON'TS

The following are some things that the mentee should **DO** in the mentoring relationship:

DO:

- Establish open and honest communication and a forum for idea exchange.
- Understand what you want from the mentoring relationship and communicate your goals and aspirations to your mentor.
- Understand what you have to give, as well as receive, from the relationship.
- Act on your mentor's advice when you feel it is applicable to your situation. Follow up with resources/references that your mentor gives you to find answers or needed information.
- Keep all scheduled appointments with your mentor and display professional behavior and dress, as appropriate.
- Arrange frequent contacts with your mentor through telephone, email, face-to-face, etc.
- Be flexible on meeting times and places.
- Be realistic and maintain a positive attitude.
- Be ambitious and enthusiastic.

The following are some things mentees should **NOT DO** in the mentoring relationship:

DON'T:

- Ask for advice on everything. Have a purpose in each request.
- Ask your mentor to act in your place or tell you precisely what to do.
- Rely on your mentor to give or seek answers to all your questions/requests.
- Complain about other people or missed opportunities in an unprofessional manner.
- Commit yourself to obligations you cannot keep.
- Cancel meetings with your mentor at the last minute.

Adapted from <http://bit.ly/NDSU-mentoring-program>