

Effective Mentoring Relationships

Adapted from Minnesota State Executive Development Program

Successful mentoring, defined

Mentoring is successful when both parties are inspired by and gain satisfaction from the partnership. It includes:

- Open communication characterized by honesty, integrity, and confidentiality
- Shared agreement about the expectations and goals for the relationship
- Mutual trust and respect
- Mutual commitment to follow through on agreements

Benefits for mentors

Serving as a mentor can provide many benefits to experienced leaders, including:

- Receiving feedback and perspective regarding the views of people serving at different levels in the organization
- Strengthening one's own skills and leadership growth while challenging and coaching an emerging leader
- Developing rewarding professional relationships and contacts
- Making a contribution to the system and the community
- Providing an opportunity to pass on a legacy to the next generation of leaders

Getting the most out of the mentoring experience

1. Make time to attend regular meetings with the mentee
2. Listen carefully
3. Focus on the mentee's personal and/or professional goals
4. Provide honest and constructive feedback, both positive and negative
5. Offer advice and assistance in dealing with real or perceived roadblocks to the mentee's effective leadership
6. Share your organizational knowledge and personal experiences
7. Be flexible and open to learning from the mentee
8. Maintain confidentiality

Expectations for mentees:

You are the driver of your mentoring relationship. Be proactive to ensure you and your mentor gain the most from the relationship.

1. Take responsibility for initiating regular meetings and setting the discussion agenda
2. Be proactive in asking for the mentor's help and advice when needed
3. Respect the mentor's time
4. Listen carefully
5. Be flexible and open to new ideas
6. Accept constructive feedback, both positive and negative
7. Maintain confidentiality

Tips for effective mentoring

1. **Be fully present.** Mentoring takes your full attention and excellent listening skills. Set the environment to minimize distractions.
2. **Make a personal connection.** Take time to get to know the mentee and the mentee's professional and personal goals. Pay attention to where the mentee is expressing energy and emotion (excitement, anticipation, feeling overwhelmed, etc.)
3. **Bring curiosity and openness.** Your role is not to solve the mentee's problems, but rather to listen without judgement and serve as a sounding board to help the mentee explore their own answers.
4. **Ask direct questions and provide honest feedback.** Give specific praise and criticism, along with encouragement and helpful feedback about the mentee's strengths and weaknesses. Ask the critical questions to help the mentee gain perspective and direction about their goals and interests.
5. **Provide context.** Share organizational knowledge and help the mentee understand how their issues fit into the bigger picture. You may have new perspectives or background that can provide context.
6. **Tell our story.** Share wisdom and insights gained from past experiences. People learn best through stories and your relevant experiences will be valuable to the mentee. At the same time, balance the time so you are not doing all the talking.
7. **Offer advice selectively.** The best time to offer advice is when your mentee asks for it. Remember that advice is only helpful when the recipient is ready and able to act on it.
8. **Set and honor expectations and boundaries.** Have a conversation at the first meeting about goals and outcomes for the relationship. Discuss preferences for the community. For example, is it ok for the mentee to call your cell phone?

Expectations for president mentor program

How and the cadence of mentor/mentee interactions will be determined by each pair to meet the mentee's needs. At a minimum, the mentor/mentee should:

- Set-up a regular scheduled time each month to connect either by phone or in person
- Mentor should connect with mentee before each Leadership Council meeting to provide context for agenda items
- Mentor should connect with mentee after each Leadership Council meeting to debrief and provide guidance on who to connect with if there are lingering questions