

**NWS
Mentoring Program
Handbook**



**NOAA's NWS Office of Equal Opportunity
and Diversity Management
(OEODM)**

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NWS Approach to Mentoring

Introduction

The National Weather Service (NWS) recognizes the value of Mentoring as an instrument of organizational learning. This program will provide an opportunity for successful individuals (mentors) to share wise counsel, knowledge, and advise new or junior employees. This interactive mechanism will not only enhance the skills of seasoned NWS employees but also enhance professional and career skills of new employees entering the agency. The mentor can help employees learn to handle various situations, enhance their developmental skills, and avoid some of the pitfalls that can potentially side track a career or delay promotion opportunities. This mentoring program has the potential of broadening skills, experience, and expertise throughout the organization.

The Mentoring Program is designed to become an integral part of the NWS culture and help new employees realize their goals and potentials. It is intended to help all employees personally and professionally development and enhance their working relationships. This document provides recommended guidelines for establishing a NWS Mentoring Program.

Definitions of a Mentor

- Person who shares experience, knowledge and wisdom about a particular occupation, their occupation or about the workplace in general.
- *“One who is a trusted counselor or guide”* - Webster’s Dictionary.
- *“Anyone who has a beneficial life-style or style–altering effect on another person, generally as a result of personal one-on-one contact; one who offers knowledge, insight, perspective, or wisdom that is helpful to another person in a relationship which goes beyond duty and obligation.”* Gordon Shea

Mentoring is one of the oldest forms of human development

Archeologists found, in the Stone Age cultures, evidence of talented artisans who instructed younger people to perpetuate their skills.

In the Odyssey, when King Odysseus went off to fight the Trojan War, he left Telemachus, his son and only heir, with a trusted friend to teach him how to become a good leader. That wise and sensitive man’s name was Mentor.

What is Mentoring?

- **Tutoring**
 - Passing on knowledge; identifying and closing gaps in a learner’s knowledge and needs.
- **Coaching**
 - Providing specialized attention to the individual being coached to help improve performance (e.g., in making a presentation).
- **Counseling**
 - Providing feedback to help improve individual behavior or general performance of duties and to align the interests of the individual with the interests of the organization.

Time Requirement

A reasonable amount of **official time** (up to 2 hours per month) will be allowed for mentoring relationships. At the discretion of the mentee and mentor, other sessions may be scheduled on their own time. Each mentoring relationship will vary according to needs and interests; there are no restrictions on informal mentoring. Participants are urged to frequently “check-in” with each other via informal phone calls or emails.

Mentor Matching Process

The mentee shall select three potential mentors that would best match his/her needs. He/She shall select from a list of eligible applications, and submit his/her selection to OEODM for final determination. The OEODM will propose tentative matches of mentors and mentees. The OEODM may establish a panel or designate a program focal point to determine final matches. The panel should consist of a mix of mid and senior level personnel. The Program panel or the focal point shall match the mentor and mentee based on similar areas of interest or other criteria. Efforts will be made to match mentees with mentors who can best support their respective developmental needs. Both mentee and mentor shall agree upon final matches.

A system has been incorporated in the Program in the event that an initial match or ongoing relationship is not satisfactory; provisions will be made for re-matching. The mentor and mentee may turn to OEODM for guidance and assistance. Unsatisfactory mentoring relationships may be terminated at any time during the one-year period by contacting OEODM. An attempt will be made to match the mentee with another mentor. Normally re-matching will only be undertaken during the first six months of the program.

Mentee/Mentor Agreement

Each mentee/mentor pair will develop a written agreement that will identify a set of measurable goals to be completed during the program year. This document will serve as a contract between the mentor and mentee. The agreement format will be provided by OEODM.

Program Training

The OEODM will serve as the program coordinator and will provide mandatory orientation for mentors, mentees, and their respective supervisors. The orientation will consist of an overview of the mentoring program, expectations, time commitments, other aspects of the program, and help addressing questions for potential participating members of the mentoring program.

The program shall provide a developmental training session for mentors and mentees. All mentors and mentees must receive formal training after being chosen to participate in the program. Development training will focus on the specific relationship between the mentor and mentee. Through these sessions, mentors and mentees will learn how to develop a successful mentoring relationship. The workshop would help mentors develop listening, advising, and coaching skills. The workshop would also help mentees work with mentors to develop goals and a learning plan.

Number of Participants

The program will start with a maximum of 100 mentor/mentee partnerships (total 200). Applicants who wish to choose their own mentee/mentor partner should write the name on their application and encourage this person to apply. Both people must apply to be matched. The OEODM will consider your preference but cannot guarantee a match.

Eligibility Requirements

- Participating as a mentor or mentee is strictly voluntary; however, the following requirements must be met:
- A permanent full-time NWS employee.
- Supervisory approval for your participation in the program.
- (This requirement applies to both mentees and mentors).
- GS-11 level or above to be a mentor. Mentees can be of any grade level.

To Be A Successful Mentee, You Should:

- Be prepared to make a serious effort to set career goals and achieve them.
- Commit yourself to take the initiative to foster a positive relationship with your mentor.
- Listen to your mentor's suggestions, evaluate them and take appropriate action.
- Be prepared to commit time and effort to work toward your goals in addition to the official time for the mentoring partnership.

To Be A Successful Mentor, You Should:

- Be able to serve as a role model and resource person for a mentee.
- Demonstrate proficiency and initiative in your own career.
- Commit to providing counsel and guidance to the mentee on how to achieve his/her full potential.
- Demonstrate patience and cooperativeness when dealing with others.
- Be able to provide feedback on career and professional issues which could impede a mentee's career development.
- Ask constructive questions.
- Be a good listener.
- Exhibit tact, diplomacy, and sensitivity in working with others who may be from a different age group, background, or culture.

Application Procedures

Interested mentors and mentees must apply to participate in the program through an application process. Interested parties must complete the application and take the following steps:

1. Obtain a copy of the application package at: **<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/eoo/home.htm>**
2. Complete the appropriate application form (mentee or mentor).
3. Complete a supervisor form and obtain the supervisor's signature.
4. Submit application forms to the following address:
**NWS Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management
1325 East West Highway
SSMC-2 Room 11348
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3281**

How do mentors benefit from the program?

Apart from the satisfaction of helping another person reach goals he or she has set, many mentors develop a new perspective, learn about another organization, gain additional insight into their own paths and values, and go through a reflective process similar to the mentee's. As they help someone else evaluate their career issues and goals, mentors often find themselves doing some worthwhile soul searching about their own careers as well. Given the opportunity to personally witness the positive impact of mentoring on the mentees, mentors are often inspired to reach out to their employees in more supportive ways or to seek informal mentors for themselves.

What is expected of the mentees?

Each mentee is responsible for defining a career goal and strategy (with the help of the mentor) and for striving to achieve career goals. At the logistical level, the mentee is responsible for meeting with the mentor at least two hours per month for the year of the program, developing a contract with the mentor and sending it to OEODM on time, responding to OEODM calls to ensure the pair is progressing, evaluating their progress in quarterly reports, sharing information with other mentees through brown bag lunches and other informal gatherings, and participating in mid-year and final evaluation sessions.

How many mentees and mentors will be selected?

A maximum total of 100 mentors and 100 mentees will be selected. Anyone can be a mentor if he/she is willing to make the commitment. A mentor needs to be able to listen, offer suggestions, and maintain confidentiality. A mentor does not have to intervene for the mentee or tell them what to do. The program recruiting process is to ensure the best possible match. Every mentee is guaranteed a match, but some mentors will serve as Mentors-at-Large rather than being paired with one individual. Mentors-at-Large will be called upon to work with the small groups of mentees at brown bag lunches on career topics or to respond to requests for informational interviews. The demands on their time will be less than for mentors paired with mentees.

What training will be provided?

Mandatory training is the foundation of the program so that both mentors and mentees start the NWS's Mentoring Program with an understanding of how the mentoring process works, and specific goals they can work towards. Upon applying, mentors and mentees agree to attend all training sessions, if selected for the program.

What if I know someone I'd like to be matched with?

Both people must apply. Please indicate on both of your application forms that you would like to be matched. OEODM doesn't guarantee the match, since it has to consider the needs of the group as a whole but will attempt to accommodate you.

How will a mentor and mentee work together?

The mentor and mentee will work together to develop and sign an agreement that indicates what each is responsible for, what the goals of the relationship are, how they assess how they are doing, and any other pertinent information.

