Mentoring Guide
Developed by the Nova Scotia
Public Service Commission

This guide for mentoring has been designed to support the leadership and career planning and development of employees and is based on our values of respect, integrity, diversity, accountability, and the public good.

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As a compliment to the formal corporate mentorship program (known as the iNSpire Mentorship Program), this document serves as a guide to assist employees to benefit from mentoring relationships managed informally or within departments. It includes successful mentoring practices and working tools for mentors and mentees.

“When people tell me they’ve learned from experience,
I tell them the trick is to learn from other people’s experience.”

- Warren Buffett
INTRODUCTION

In today’s environment, our organization needs to handle more complex human resource and business situations, make decisions faster, and do more with less than they have in the past. Furthermore, in an increasingly competitive environment, organizations like ours must find innovative ways to attract, retain, and develop employees, and transfer knowledge from the more experienced to the less experienced. Mentoring is one way to address these challenges.

Mentors have always existed in our workplace. In many professions within our network, mentors are thought to enhance, if not ensure, the professional development and success of new employees. Increasingly, according to Employee Engagement survey data, more mid-career professionals are seeking mentors when they wish to develop new levels of expertise and to advance in their career.

Mentoring has a significant impact on both individual and organizational effectiveness—the benefits are many:

• career development for employees
• improved recruitment
• increased communication across functions and departments
• increased productivity
• informed succession management
• long-term employee retention
• new employee orientation
WHAT IS MENTORING?

Mentoring is all about building a developmental relationship. Mentors work with an employee so that they feel there is someone who is interested in their development and cares about them as an individual. It is important to note that mentorship relationships can take a number of forms based on the mentee’s needs:

**Skills mentoring:** mentees are matched with an expert in a particular subject area to enhance their skills

**Career mentoring:** mentors offer career planning advice

**Diversity mentoring:** mentors assist employees with adapting to new cultures and languages

**Peer mentoring:** employees are mentored by peers with similar job responsibilities

**Team mentoring:** mentees work with multiple mentors, who each provide assistance in a specific area

**Reverse mentoring:** differently experienced employees provide others with fresh perspectives on the needs of different communities, styles, etc.
**Mentoring Is:**

- about helping people to assume more responsibility for more effective career management
- a relationship designed to build confidence and help individuals take increased initiative in personal development
- a balanced relationship requiring equal commitment and investment from both mentors and mentees
- a career accelerator for those who have already demonstrated the ability to invest in personal career achievement

**Mentoring Is Not:**

- a one-way coaching initiative where information is exchanged just to teach a particular skill
- a process to encourage unmotivated people
- a process to address performance issues

Mentoring is a joint venture. Successful mentoring means sharing responsibility for learning. It is about building a partnership relationship. It is characterized by: acceptance, trust, openness, support, caring, and commitment.
1. The mentor’s job is to promote intentional learning, which includes capacity-building through methods such as instructing, coaching, providing experiences, modeling, and advising.

2. Mentors, as leaders of a learning experience, need to share their “how to do it so it comes out right” stories. They also need to share their experiences of failure, i.e., “how I did it wrong.” Both types of stories are powerful lessons that provide valuable opportunities for analyzing individual and organizational realities.

3. Mentoring—when it works—taps into continuous learning that is not an event, or even a string of discrete events. Rather, it is the synthesis of ongoing events, experiences, observation, studies, and thoughtful analysis.
OUR FORMAL MENTOR PROGRAM: iNSpire

An inter-departmental mentorship program, called “iNSpire” has been developed by a committee of departmental representatives and several private sector contributors. iNSpire is a way to support personal and professional development through enhancing relationships across our network. It is a formal mentorship program that connect public servants from across the organization. Expertise will be shared to support mentees in specific areas like furthering knowledge of the Diversity and Inter-Cultural Competency or simply sharing experience gained through years in public service. Mentors and mentees may be paired within or outside their departments. The mentoring relationship helps to learn from the experiences of others, determine appropriate professional development, strengthen networks, and further build a positive and engaging workplace culture.

For more information about the iNSpire Mentorship Program please contact:

Public Service Renewal
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Do you want a mentor?
If you are considering seeking out a mentor or beginning a mentoring relationship, it is important to be clear about what you are seeking to achieve. Mentoring objectives may include:

- Choosing the right training or developmental opportunity
- Building leadership skills (aligned with Leadership Competency Development)
- Asking for a new opportunity at work
- Considering a new career path
- Balancing work and life responsibilities
- Becoming more productive at work
- Networking in your industry
- Choosing your next career
- Handling a conflict in the workplace

Do you want to be a mentor?
If you think that you would like to take on a mentoring role, it is important to understand what the role entails, whether you have the competencies required for the role, and whether you are ready to take it on. Information about the role of a mentor can be found in this guide and Leadership Competency assessment tools can be found at the PSC:

www.novascotia.ca/psc/hrCentre/resources/ode/competencies.asp
Types of mentors

Mentors are more than people who are willing to take time to help others grow and develop. In fact, just as there are different kinds of mentoring, there are several different kinds of mentors, too. Successful mentoring relationships start off with a clear understanding of what is expected of and offered by the mentor.

There are four broad categories of mentors. Depending on the needs of the mentee, different mentors may be sought out at different times. It is entirely possible that one mentor may fill all four roles. The best way to begin a productive relationship is to focus on an immediate need and allow the relationship to develop and transition based on the needs and availability of the mentor and mentee.

The Networking Mentor
A networking mentor offers inspiration, contacts, and connections, and shares ideas. This is often a shorter-term relationship, but conversations are known to increase strength and confidence.

The Project Mentor
A project mentor can answer specific questions about a particular project or a topic of interest. A project mentor can help explain new technology, harness social media, manage finances, or any specific area of development.

The Career Mentor
A career mentor understands the nuances of the career a mentee is exploring. This mentor provides insight into the profession and might help develop a résumé, identify ways and places to network, or share opportunities for development, such as; books, conferences, and professional sources to contact.

The Personal Mentor
A personal mentor can help deal with life changes. The ideal personal mentor is someone with relevant personal experience able to provide sound advice and reassurance.
STARTING YOUR MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

Preparing to be a Mentor

Throughout your life, you may receive requests to be a mentor. This is your opportunity to give back by sharing your knowledge and expertise with others. As you jump into the mentor role, ask yourself: What is the most important piece of advice that you personally gained from a mentor? At some point in your life, was there someone who said something that helped open your eyes to other possibilities?

Think about what your mentor said to you and how they said it. What did you respect about them? What characteristics and traits did they have? Were they a good sounding board? Did they provide you with encouragement? Did they provide you with honest feedback? How did they inspire you to achieve more?

Now think about yourself and the type of mentor that you would like to be. What value can you add to a mentee’s life?

Preparing to be a Mentee

The mentee is in charge of the mentoring relationship. Starting off the mentoring relationship by demonstrating organization and ownership of this process will set the tone. Identify what you need and expect of your mentor, and be prepared to lay this out during your first meeting. Seek to understand your mentor’s needs and expectations, as well, and know that it is the responsibility of the mentee to keep the relationship on track. If a meeting is cancelled, the mentee is responsibility to reschedule, etc.
HOW TO STRUCTURE A MENTORING MEETING

Step 1: Come prepared
Before each call or meeting there are ways mentees should get prepared:

1. Set a goal for the conversation. At the end of the meeting, do you want more information about how to deal with a difficult situation, get a referral to someone within that person’s network, set up a face-to-face meeting with that individual, establish a good working relationship with that person, or get some advice on your résumé?

2. Do some quick research about the department and the person you will be talking to by visiting their intranet site, doing a Google search on departmental news or on the individual themselves, reviewing their LinkedIn profile and talking to people in your network who may know this individual.

3. Practice prior to your meeting. The first meeting can be the hardest and will likely take the most time to prepare for.

Step 2: Building Rapport
The people you trust the most are those you feel most comfortable with. Sometimes this level of comfort comes easily while other times it takes a great amount of work. In relation to a mentor/mentee meeting, an initial mentoring conversation will likely be short and you have a lot to achieve within that time frame. Taking the time to develop rapport by taking the first few minutes to break the ice sets a positive tone for the rest of the meeting. Building rapport helps you get to know the person a little better and gives you important clues into the person’s interests and perspectives.

The following information provided by www.mentorcity.com (managers of the iNSpire Mentorship Program for the Province of Nova Scotia) provides a few tips on how mentees can structure mentoring meetings. Used with permission.
Step 3: Asking Questions

Once you have taken time to build rapport, the next step is to ask questions. In preparation for each conversation, write down questions that you think are important in helping you to achieve your mentoring objective. Writing down a list of questions helps you structure the conversation and feel prepared. Sometimes the conversation will go in a totally different direction than you planned, so be open and flexible, while still focusing on your goal:

- To what do you attribute your success?
- What was the turning point in your life?
- Who was your mentor or role model? What did you gain from this mentor?
- What is your greatest achievement?
- Who has been an inspiration in your life?

Step 4: Wrapping Up the Conversation

The mentor is being generous with their time and to show respect, it is important to make good use of your time together and to end the conversation on a strong note. A strong conclusion leaves your mentor with a good feeling about the time spent with you and gives you a chance, if appropriate, to set up any next steps.

During the final few minutes, thank the mentor for taking the time to speak to you, provide a short summary of the discussion and what you have learned from it. It is also a good opportunity to discuss any action items that you and the mentor agreed to during the conversation.
Networking Mentor Questions

Examples of questions that you can ask a networking mentor:

• Who was your mentor or role model? What did you gain from this mentor?
• What strategies do you use to stay focused on your goals?
• Do you have any advice for me?
• Who do you rely on when you feel challenged in your work?
• What associations/networks have you engaged with that have been particularly useful?
Career Mentor Questions
Examples of questions that you can ask a career mentor:

• How has your career progressed within this industry and/or department?
• What attributes do you feel it takes to succeed in this industry and/or this department?
• What is the best way to bring an idea forward in this department?
• What are some of the personality traits that you think a good leader needs in this department?
• How did you decide to get into this field?
• What courses did you take to reach this level?
• What do you like and dislike about this field?

Project Mentor Questions
Examples of questions that you can ask a project mentor:

• What are some of the magazines, books or websites that you recommend?
• How did you use (insert project name) to build your career?
• How much time did you dedicate to (insert project name) in order to see results?
• What are some of the key ingredients of (insert project name)?

Personal Mentor Questions
Examples of questions that you can ask a personal mentor:

• How did you stay positive throughout your challenging experience?
• How did you talk to your friends and family about what you were going through?
• What were some of the reactions that you experienced?
Staying in Touch – Maintaining the Relationship

Once the meeting is complete, it is important to take stock of what transpired, what your next steps will be, and to evaluate your outcomes. If evaluated well, you will be better able to integrate what you have learned.

Here are a few actions that you can consider after each meeting:

• Take some time to think about the meeting. Write down what you did well, where you feel that you could improve and what you would have liked to communicate differently. By writing this down, it will help you to be even more effective during your next meeting.

• Document advice, referrals and lessons you learned from the meeting.

• Document personal details that helped build rapport such as their children’s names, etc.

• Document action items and any follow up that is required – note in your calendar.

• Craft and send a thank you note to that person.

• Invite this person to join your social media network. This is a great way for them to remember you through your status updates, and when you accept new contacts/friends, they will see your name and think about you, e.g. Yammer, LinkedIn, etc.

When you reach out to this mentor again, before your next conversation, review this information so that you remember what was discussed and their personal information.
Keeping your Promises

You are as good as your reputation. Your reputation is built on your ability to keep the promises you make. For example, if you have committed to sending a contact name on a specific topic, you need to follow through. In your calendar, jot this action item down with the promised date. If for some reason you are unable to provide the contact, send the person a quick email letting them know that you are still working on this. Then move this item to another date on your calendar so that it doesn’t slip your mind.

Integrating Lessons Learned into your Life

During your mentoring meetings, you will receive advice and ideas. How do you determine what advice you can use? Not all advice is good advice. To determine which is which, write down a list of all the advice you received and the lessons that you learned. Now, consider the list. Ask yourself how you feel about each item (what is your intuition telling you?). You may want to rate each piece of advice on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being poor and 5 being outstanding). Now, cross off all the advice that you do not feel good about implementing and that received a low rating. If you are not sure about something, ask someone you trust for their feedback.

After you have vetted the advice and you have one or two things that you can implement into your life, it is time to think about how you can do this. Track your progress and reward yourself for successfully integrating new ideas into your life. Every time you integrate a successful new idea or approach you will feel re-energized with a feeling of forward movement in your quest for greater success.