

Tip Sheet: Mentor Assistance with Goal Setting and Achievement

As a mentor, your job is to help your mentee achieve their stated project goals. While goal setting is their responsibility, your guidance in this matter can be very helpful.

As the first step towards setting their mentoring program goals, mentees are asked to consider what they want to achieve during the time they have with their mentor. They are reminded that these goals are their own, not the ones that someone else (boss, mentor, best friend) thinks they should be setting. Your role here is not to help them decide what they should accomplish, but if they seek assistance, to help them frame their thoughts within basic goal setting parameters.

You might also help them consider your timeframe and be realistic. Mentees are instructed to set themselves up for success by making their goals achievable within the time you have together. If a goal is too large, then it can seem that progress is not being made or they may not be able to meet it within the mentoring program's timeframe. Help them by reminding them that sometimes it is advantageous to set smaller goals that will assist you with achieving the larger overall goal. Offer to assist your mentee if they appear to need guidance. Remember however, that these are their goals and that the mentee should always be in the driver's seat.

Help them be realistic: It is important for them to set goals that they can achieve. You might help them towards this by considering with them some of the obstacles you might encounter that could hinder their ability to achieve them as stated.

Be open to allowing your mentee to re-evaluate their goals with you midway through your time together. This is an important aspect of the mentoring experience. If your mentee finds that one of their original goals is not attainable in the timeframe, or their needs or desires have changed, do not be afraid to suggest that they adjust their goals accordingly. Life rarely happens in a straight line. The personal insight and understanding that your mentee has gained through the mentoring process could very well change how they feel about one or more of their goals. It is suggested that they work with you (if they choose) to make the goal one that is more appropriate and helpful.

Illinois Arts Alliance Facilitated Mentoring Program Tool Kit

SMART Goals:

This is a time-honored tool for setting goals that you might find helpful. It pretty much sums up the main points made above. A SMART Goal is one that includes the following attributes:

- **S** Specific
- **M** Measurable
- **A** Attainable
- **R** Relevant
- **T** Time-bound

For example, instead of having “increase my professional network” as a goal, it is more powerful to say “To have met and communicated with 10 new professional contacts by the end of the mentoring program.”

How You Can Help Your Mentee

You and your mentee can talk about the ways that he or she can accomplish their goals within the time frame you’ve defined. You can give them suggestions about how to meet this goal, help them make appropriate contacts, take them with you to networking events and hold them accountable for following through with the plans made to achieve the goal.

As they are working towards their goals, you can listen to what they are learning about their professional skills and their personal insights, ask them questions that may help them move closer to the goals’ achievement and encourage them to continue in their efforts.

Achieving Goals

When your mentee has achieved a goal, make time with him or her to enjoy the satisfaction of having done so. Absorb the implications of its achievement, and observe the progress they have made towards other goals. If the goal was a significant one (or even if it isn’t), you and your mentee may choose to reward yourselves appropriately.