

Tip Sheet: Making the Most of Your Mentoring Relationship

The following are a few tips that can help you and your partner start out on the right foot as well as continue to keep the relationship running smoothly. You can use these in preparation for, as well as during, your first meeting together. You should also revisit them regularly to freshen up your interactions throughout the program period.

Some participants have found it helpful to create a check-in routine to use at the beginning of each meeting; some of these questions and suggestions might be incorporated into this ritual.

Setting the Agenda

- Express expectations for the relationship upfront. For example:
 - How do you want to meet?
 - What do you expect to be responsible for bringing to each meeting and what do you expect your partner will be responsible for in return?
 - How will you know that you're making progress together?
 - Revisit these regularly – make checking in a part of each agenda.
- Mentors: Ask your mentee to outline their personal and professional goals for the year (or whatever timeframe is appropriate). Together, the mentor and mentee can draft the to-do list of what needs to happen to reach those goals.
- Mentees: Identify and share issues or goals in advance of the meeting.
- Mentees: Come to meetings prepared with questions.
- Mentees: Ask your mentor “what do you know now that you wish you’d known “then”?”
- Together: Periodically come back to the question of why the mentee wanted to be involved in this mentoring program – what was motivating them then? Is it different now? How so?

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Facilitated Mentoring Program Tool-Kit**

- Don't cancel or put off a meeting just because there is no urgent to-do list (ie: I have to figure out how to present this budget to the board). If you can, use the time to address bigger questions instead of focusing on day-to-day or immediate issues.

Making time:

- Find out what time of day works best for both of you and schedule accordingly.
- Try setting regular meeting dates in advance.
- Check in regularly by phone or email if you are unable to meet in person.
- Focus on quality of meetings vs. quantity of meetings. If meeting face-to-face every month just doesn't work, find a way to connect that takes less time and is more helpful to you both.
- As much as possible, make yourselves available in between face-to-face meetings for phone and/or email contact.
- Remember that both mentoring partners are responsible for making time to meet.

In general:

- Make yourself available. Regularly let your mentoring partner know (through actions and words) that you are interested and remain committed to the relationship.
- Take the time and energy to establish trust. Recognize that this does not happen overnight and takes effort on both parts.
- Share work samples with each other as appropriate.
- Visit each other's work sites and/or attend each other's events.
- Maintain your curiosity. Ask questions of each other.
- Remember this is a two-way street – you both get to learn from each other.
- Keep an eye on the big picture. What are you working towards?