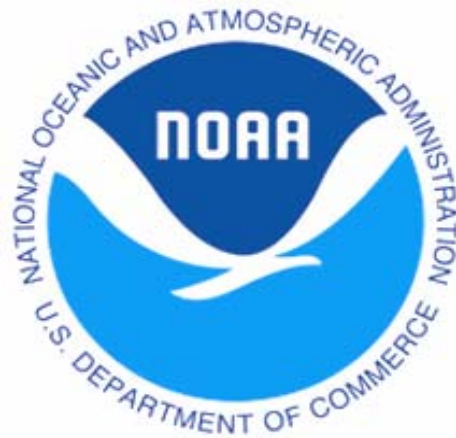


**NWS
Mentoring Program
Handbook**



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

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(as of August 25, 2006)

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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.

- **Mentoring**
 - Using the mentor's knowledge, insight, perspective and wisdom to help mentees achieve their personal satisfaction and fulfillment. Mentoring may also include aspects of coaching and counseling.

General Policy

All NWS employees are eligible to participate in the program. Mentors should be GS-11 or higher or Senior Executive Service members. The mentee may be any grade level. Mentors cannot be the immediate supervisor of the mentee. All participants of the program are encouraged to commit to a one-year formal mentoring partnership. At the end of the year, the formal support will end. However, participants will be invited to continue their partnership on an informal basis including future mentoring activities. Time spent on developmental activities will vary depending on the agreement signed by the mentor and mentee. It is recommended that partners meet at least once every two weeks for one-hour during work hours. Each partnership will work out an arrangement that is best for both parties.

The Mentoring Program Objectives:

- Career Development.
- Improve and Effectively Manage Diversity in the Workplace.
- Improve Morale.

Mentoring Program Overview

Management

The Mentoring Program is managed and administered by the OEODM. This office will provide resource support and monitor program activities to ensure that objectives are met. The program will be evaluated periodically by OEODM and feedback will be solicited from both mentors and mentees.

Administration

OEODM matches mentors and mentees based on similar areas of interest and other criteria. OEODM provides orientation and training to mentors, mentees, and their supervisors. Mentors will have a formal meeting with the mentee once every two weeks for at least one hour to build confidence, and explore any issues, new challenges, or simply to gain a different perspective on things. This will provide the mentee(s) with a sounding board to explore career options and open up new communication channels and learning opportunities. Mentors serve as a coach, teacher, counselor, and challenger to help the mentee handle various situations and avoid pitfalls that can develop, especially early in the mentee's career. **Supervisory approval is required to participate in the program.**

Program Length

The pilot program runs for six months. After that time, OEODM will make adjustments to the program and handbook for the Assistant Administrator's approval. The Program is designed to last on a formal basis for a period of one year. Each participating mentee and mentor must agree to work together for that year.

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.

Roles and Responsibilities

The OEODM Mentoring Program Coordinator is responsible for all mentoring activities and assists in coordinating mentor assignments for each new employee. As Individual Development Plans (IDPs) become standard practice, the manager will ensure the employees focus on development. This includes a mentor who can help build necessary knowledge, skills and abilities for the employees' career.

Role of the Mentee

- Participate in all program activities by attending orientation, mentor/mentee meetings and other scheduled events.
- Develop short and/or long term goals at the onset of the mentor/mentee relationship.
- Accept feedback, be patient and cooperative.
- Accept the program boundaries (i.e., the mentor is a career counselor, not an advocate).
- Use the program to enhance present career direction and identify future skills necessary for career growth.
- Accept responsibility for the mentor/mentee relationship by calling the mentor and initiating contact for meetings. The mentee is responsible for developing and fostering the mentoring relationship.

PLEASE NOTE: This program does not serve as a means for promotions, although it can provide career enhancement towards career opportunities.

Role of the Mentor

- Serve as an unbiased confidant and counselor with whom the mentee may discuss work-related issues and other concerns perceived as impeding job performance.
- Provide objective and positive suggestions on appropriate office conduct and work ethics.
- Provide objective and positive suggestions on how the mentee may improve work proficiency and productivity.
- Participate in all programs activities by attending orientation, mentor/mentee meetings and other scheduled events. Participation is **required** unless workload is negatively impacted.

Mentoring Program Guidelines:

- Both parties must keep all information discussed in sessions confidential within the agency's ethical parameters and legal restrictions.
- No matches will be made within the supervisor/manager chain of command.
- Participation is optional.
- Mentors and mentees in the program must have training in order to participate.
- Mentors must be at the GS-11 grade level or above. Mentees may be of any grade level.
- Participants must meet at least once every other week for one hour during the formal mentoring process.
- Mentees must be a lower grade than the Mentor.

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**

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do we need a Mentoring Program?

Many employees who have significant potential do not have mentors to help them identify their strengths, improve their performance, and set career goals. The mentoring program is a link to bring together people who want to help others learn how to achieve their goals and those who are willing to take the initiative and seek a mentor's guidance. At the organizational level, the agency hopes to encourage the use of mentoring as a developmental tool."

What are the program's goals and objectives?

NWS mentoring program's goal is to provide employees with the (a) coaching; (b) job and career information; (c) feedback counseling; and, (d) caring a mentor can give. Mentoring, as the foundation of the program, is an approach that provides employees with the kind of support that often results in their making substantial contributions to the agency. The NWS ultimately hopes to incorporate mentoring into the agency's culture as "a business necessity" rather than something restricted to the fortunate few. To provide access to as broad a group as possible, the mentees will vary by office, region, grade, and other factors.

For mentees, what are the objectives?

- Gain exposure to different options, perspectives, and organizational cultures.
- Expand the range of contacts, and develop an ability to create their own networks.
- Discover and understand "the rules of the game" in the work world.
- Develop a greater sense of career direction and improved job performance.

What can the program do for me as a mentee?

It is up to you to take the initiative and take action. You must set your own goals for self improvement, better work performance, and long-term career strategy. Your mentor will be there to serve as a guide, to help you refine your goals, and to support you as you work towards achieving them. However, it is up to you to personally achieve the goals you have set for yourself. Your mentor may not meet with your supervisor or advocate on your behalf. He/She will help you refine your career plans, but cannot intervene for you. NWS's Mentoring Program does not incorporate progressive steps for advancement. It is not intended as a means to achieve automatic promotions.

What can my mentor do for me?

Your mentor can help you make a plan, progress, and encourage you to pursue it strategically. Your mentor can tell you how others see you and suggest ways to make positive changes. But your mentor can't make a decision for you, run your career, make calls for you, or use his or her influence for you. You have to take the initiative to do those things for yourself.

Will participation in the program lead to a promotion?

NWS' Mentoring Program is not an "Upward Mobility" program or a program that incorporates progressive steps for advancement. It is not intended as a means to achieve automatic promotions.

How are mentees chosen?

Mentees submit applications to the OEODM.

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.

What if I'm not comfortable with my mentor/mentee?

The purpose of your first meeting is to see whether the two of you are compatible. The match is not final until you have both approved it. The OEODM will check in with you to see how your relationship is going and whether you are moving towards the goals you set. Please let OEODM know if things aren't working the way you had hoped. Often, a problem in a relationship is a question of miscommunication that can be cleared up through open discussion. Occasionally re-matching will be necessary, but normally re-matching will be considered only during the first three to six months of the program.

How much time can I spend with my mentor/mentee?

You are allowed up to two hours of official time each month to meet. It is up to you to negotiate arrange meetings your supervisor to ensure that mentoring does not interfere with your regular duties. If you must travel a significant distance to meet, consider meeting at the beginning or end of the day to make it more efficient, or consolidate your time together into longer meetings and meet fewer times during a month. You and your partner may agree to meet more than the 2 hours a month. Additional time must be spent outside of the normal working hours "on your own time," e.g. during meal periods.

How long does the program last?

The formal program lasts one year.

How are supervisors involved in the program?

Supervisors benefit by having employees participating in the program as either mentors or mentees. Mentors develop stronger coaching and counseling skills and expand their networks through the training provided and by meeting with the mentees. Mentees have a strong sense of direction and often show more motivation on the job when they have a goal. They seek feedback and respond to it, and hear from their mentor on areas for improvement. Because the relationship between the mentor/mentee is confidential, it is up to the mentee to communicate with the supervisor. A program ground rule is that mentors do not contact supervisors, or vice versa. At the end of the year, respective supervisors will be recognized along with the mentors and mentees.

What if I apply and I am not selected?

If you are not selected as a mentor or mentee, you will receive a notification from OEODM.

Where does the program fit in the NWS approach to career development?

It is important for all of us to access our skills, develop mental needs, and job situation on a regular basis. Periodic self-evaluations can help identify the challenges we currently face and the skills and personal resources we need to successfully meet challenges. The NWS Mentoring Program is a tool, which enables the participants to make a self-assessment based on the training that they will receive from other accredited program areas. The program will consist of a diversified group of participants who will share experiences, be coached, empowered, and encouraged to approach their individual career development.

