

TOOL 1.20

Sample Mentoring/Mentee Agreement

- » **GOAL:** Improve leadership and management development by creating mentorship relationships within the company
- » **TARGET UNIT:** Human Resources

What is a mentorship program?

Mentorship programs connect junior and more senior staff, taking advantage of existing expertise, knowledge, and experience in a company and/or sector to provide guidance for more junior staff. Mentorship programs can demonstrate investment in younger staff, help them develop more fulfilling career trajectories, and help senior staff share knowledge and develop leadership skills. For companies, mentorship programs can improve communication, relationships, and learning across an organization; demonstrate investment in more junior staff; foster a culture of learning; and help staff to move more purposefully through an organization.¹⁶⁷

Why have mentors?

Structured mentorship programs that match more junior and senior staff can have myriad benefits for mentees, mentors, and the companies they work for. Mentorship programs not only offer junior staff the opportunity to learn from more experienced employees, but can also help reduce turnover, improve information flow between various parts of an organization, and increase employee satisfaction.¹⁶⁸ A 2019 LinkedIn study found that where companies invested in employees, 94% of those employees stayed in the company longer, and investment in employee learning, including mentorship programs, increased job satisfaction.¹⁶⁹

For women in male-dominated sectors such as infrastructure, mentorship can be particularly important. In these sectors, there may be fewer women in senior roles, meaning that women may have fewer role models and fewer opportunities to connect with senior women to navigate their own career paths. Establishing mentorship programs that match young women staff with male or female senior staff can help them navigate their own career decisions, make important connections, increase personal investment in their company, and strengthen employee loyalty. However, women employees are less likely to have mentors, and are less likely to seek out opportunities to be mentors or mentees than men are.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Riia O'Donnell, [How to Create a Mentorship Program \(and Why You Should\)](#), Workest by Zenefits, 2019.

¹⁶⁸ Stephanie Voza, *Mentorship Programs for Women: Advancing Your Employees and Your Business*, Mastercard, 2019.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Stephanie Neal, Jazmine Boatman PhD, Linda Miller, [Women as Mentors: Does She or Doesn't She?](#) DDI, cited June 2022, 5.

A case study of Sun Microsystems found that both mentor and mentee participants in their mentorship program were more likely to advance: mentees were five times as likely to advance, and mentors were six times more likely. Retention rates were also significantly higher among participants in the mentorship program—72% for mentees, 69% for mentors, and 49% for non-participants.¹⁷¹

Informal mentorship arrangements often evolve organically in organizations, but developing a formal program can have even greater benefits. Formally organizing a mentorship program can greatly expand who has access to mentorship arrangements. It can enhance the likelihood that appropriate mentors and mentees find each other, which is key to beneficial relationships. Furthermore, formal mentorship programs can be more effectively structured and monitored, and where they are established and developed by a company, they can include more formal learning opportunities, set aside more time for participation, and are more likely to contribute to a sense of corporate investment in employee learning and development.

How can mentorship programs help promote gender equity?

Formal mentorship programs can help support women's advancement and contribute to gender equity within a company. In male-dominated industries such as the infrastructure and natural resources sectors, there are likely to be fewer women in leadership positions. Women in more junior positions may not see as many senior women, and so may not see as many avenues for their own advancement. Creating opportunities for communication, guidance, and conversation can help women understand how senior women got to where they are and how to anticipate and manage challenges to their own career development. Cornell University found that mentoring programs improved promotion and retention rates for minorities and women by 15 to 38% compared to non-mentored employees.¹⁷²

Tips for establishing a mentorship program

- Invite interested parties to be involved in a steering group to develop the program. Such a committee could include senior managers—women and men. The program should include goals and a plan for monitoring progress. Determine how gender will be addressed in the program—will there be an emphasis on female participants and/or mentors?
- If there is a corporate gender champion, include him or her. The more formal the program, and the more closely it is tied into a company's existing gender objectives, the more likely that the program may receive funding and traction to assure longevity.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Naz Beheshti, [Improve Workplace Culture with a Strong Mentoring Program](#), Forbes, 2019.

¹⁷² Naz Beheshti, [Improve Workplace Culture with a Strong Mentoring Program](#), Forbes, 2019.

¹⁷³ Hire, [How to Create a Women's Mentorship Program in your Company](#), cited June 2022.

- Identify whether the program will include formal training for mentors, and if it will include any formal training opportunities for the cohort of mentees.
- Mentors should include senior level staff and should include the most senior female staff willing to participate. But do not limit mentee and mentorship to women; women can benefit from being mentored by men, and vice versa.
- Try not to have mentees mentored by their own boss. Where the objective is to help staff identify long-term goals and choices, mentees may not feel able to freely communicate with their current superior. If possible, encourage mentees to choose mentors who are not in their immediate reporting chain.
- Don't force the pairings: If participants—either mentors or mentees—are not enthusiastic about participating in a mentorship program, the program is not as likely to succeed. Facilitating some choice among pairings is helpful. One technique is to give mentors a choice of mentees, and then when each mentee has a selection of potential mentors, allow the mentee to select the mentor of their choice.
- Have mentors and mentees set out their expectations in a formal mentorship agreement, including how often they will meet, how long the arrangement will last, and what they hope to get out of the arrangement.
- Management should create space in people's work programs for participating in a mentorship program. Where management emphasizes that mentorship is a priority, this will reinforce investment in staff development and allow mentors and mentees to take full advantage of the program.

Draft Mentorship Agreement:

This template is meant to be customized by mentors and mentees to suit their needs. It can also be updated throughout the mentorship as goals and needs change. The following questions should be discussed by the mentor and mentee and completed together.

1. What are your goals for this mentorship arrangement? If you have different (but complementary) goals, you can include them here as well. What do you hope to achieve?

Mentor:

Mentee:

2. How will you achieve these goals? (i.e., in-person or virtual meetings; projects you will collaborate on, etc.)
3. How often will you meet? If you cannot meet, how much notice will you commit to give each other?

4. How will you evaluate if you are meeting your stated goals, or whether you need to change something to improve the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship? What timeframe will you use to evaluate? This does not need to be a formal assessment, but it can be helpful to set a timeframe for discussing the mentorship arrangement and deciding, for instance, if more frequent/less frequent meetings might help, etc.
5. Do you both/either want your conversations to stay confidential? Are there certain topics that you wish to remain confidential, but others do not need to be? (For instance, you may ask your mentor for advice on career mobility, which you might not want your current manager to hear. Or you may ask your mentor for advice on job seeking and may benefit from your mentor helping your networking.)
6. Are there any topics that you wish to name as off limits in your mentoring relationship?
7. Conditions:
 - a. Agree that if either party decides to end the mentorship arrangement, this can be done without blame or questions.
 - b. Agree to a time period for the mentorship arrangement or decide that the relationship will continue as long as both want it.¹⁷⁴

Date:

Sign:

Re-sign and date this agreement at your agreed evaluation intervals.

¹⁷⁴ Adapted from Global Women in Science, [Mentoring Agreement Template](#), cited June 2022.