



# **USDA Mentoring Coordinator Guide**

**A resource for employees serving as Mentoring  
Coordinators in the USDA Mentoring Framework**

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# I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

## Purpose of Mentoring Coordinator Guide

The purpose of the Mentoring Coordinator Guide is to serve as a resource for you as a Mentoring Coordinator in your local area. You will find a variety of tools and resources to assist you as you implement the Mentoring in your area.

Perfecting the skills discussed in the Mentoring Coordinator Training, and in this guide, will have a positive impact on your ability to implement Mentoring effectively and guide mentors and protégés through the mentoring life cycle. Use this guide as a resource throughout your experience and share the information discussed in this guide with others.

## Structure of Mentoring Coordinator Guide

The format of this guide is intentionally simple and brief to facilitate its use by busy people. The guide contains four main sections and two appendices.

**Section II** provides a broad overview of Mentoring to clarify its purpose and objectives and outline its key components.

**Section III** discusses definitions of mentoring and describes the various roles and responsibilities involved in Mentoring.

**Section IV** is the core of this guide. This section describes each phase of the Mentoring life cycle. The section begins with an overview of Mentoring life cycle, followed by a description of each phase and associated activities.

**Section V** describes specific skills that will help you navigate your way through the Mentoring life cycle, including mentoring skills, behavioral preferences, communication styles of mentors and protégés; techniques for giving effective feedback, and tips to help you manage conflict and change.

**Appendix A** includes a variety of tools, templates and resources you can use when working with mentors and protégés.

### Tools and Resources Overview

The tools, templates and resources provided in this guide will help you successfully plan and implement Mentoring in your local area. The following is an overview of the tools and templates referenced throughout the guide. These templates and tools are provided for Mentoring Coordinators to use as needed to support Mentoring at their local area. The templates can be modified as needed to meet specific agency requirements or the needs of the individual mentor and protégé.

- **Mentoring Marketing Plan:** The Mentoring Marketing Plan (Appendix A) identifies the key audiences, messages and forms of marketing and communication that should occur to raise awareness, interest and participation in Mentoring. Individual marketing tools and resources are available on the USDA Connect website at [https://connections.usda.gov/communities/service/html/communityview?communityUId=0f04b8d9-4ffd-4331-84c0-1f1390461712](https://connections.usda.gov/communities/service/html/communityview?communityUid=0f04b8d9-4ffd-4331-84c0-1f1390461712)
- **Mentoring Coordinator Checklist template:** The Mentoring Coordinator checklist (Appendix A) is a resource that you can use to keep track of the required activities to complete during the Mentoring life cycle. The template can be modified to meet agency, or individual Mentor Coordinator needs.
- **Mentor and Protégé Applications:** Mentors and protégés can use the USDA Mentoring Portal, an online mentoring database to apply for the opportunity to participate in Mentoring. These applications will be accessible at <http://www.eservices.usda.gov/usdamentoring/>
- **Mentoring Agreement template:** The Mentoring Agreement template (Appendix A) is a tool designed to facilitate the initial discussions between the mentor and protégé and to coordinate the general expectations, goals, processes and norms of the relationship. The template can be modified to meet agency, mentor and or protégé needs.
- **Mentoring Plan template:** The Mentoring Plan template (Appendix A) is a tool to document, track and monitor progress toward the protégé's developmental goals. It is important that mentors and protégés view the Mentoring Plan as a living document, reviewed continuously to assess progress, effectiveness, and impact of mentoring goals. The template can be modified to meet agency, mentor and or protégé needs.
- **Mentor Checklist and Protégé Checklist templates:** The Mentor Checklist and Protégé Checklist (Appendix A) are resources that mentors and protégés can use to keep track of the required activities that they each need to complete during the Mentoring Life cycle. The template can be modified to meet agency, mentor and or protégé needs.

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- **Mentoring Evaluation:** The evaluation of Mentoring is supported by the USDA Mentoring Portal an online database for agencies using the Portal. A baseline survey must be completed to submit an application to participate in mentoring. Mentoring Coordinators will initiate surveys using the USDA Mentoring Portal to mentors and protégés at mid-point (approximately 6 mos.) and again at the end of the 12 months.
- **Frequently Asked Questions:** The Frequently Asked Questions list (Appendix A) provides answers to basic questions about Mentoring. For additional information contact you're the local Agency Mentoring Program Manager or USDA Program Manager or the USDA Program Manager,
- **References for More Information:** References for additional reading and information are available for mentors and protégés (Appendix A).

# II. MENTORING OVERVIEW

*Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction.*  
—John Crosby

## Background of Mentoring

Mentoring has a long history as an integral part of USDA and its culture. Many agencies offer tailored mentoring programs specifically for employees in their local area. The focus of mentoring has been on fostering career relationships and exchanging career information between mentor and protégé. Each agency program may have had a slightly different focus, but whether the purpose is to orient new employees to the agency or provide career development opportunities for existing employees, mentoring has benefit to employees and their agency.

## Purpose and Objectives of Mentoring

The Mentoring Framework (Mentoring) provides consistent guidance and support for the implementation of mentoring programs throughout USDA and its agencies. Mentoring provides consistent structure, mentoring roles and responsibilities, tools and oversight to support mentoring across USDA.

Mentoring provides employees with opportunities to form new connections, broaden employee experience, assist in developing goals, and cultivate new opportunities.

Mentoring has four key objectives, as depicted in Figure 1 on page 6: 1) Transfer Institutional Knowledge, 2) Enhance Employee Skills, 3) Increase Employee Retention, and 4) Attract Top Talent.

- **Transfer Institutional Knowledge:** Mentoring provides an environment for experienced employees (mentors) to share their knowledge of USDA practices, policies, and culture with the next generation of staff through working with a protégé. Based on their knowledge of USDA or their agency, a mentor can help the protégé understand how best to accomplish their goals, within the context of working at USDA. Mentoring will also create opportunities for mentors to pass along historical and institutional knowledge that may otherwise be lost as experienced USDA employees retire and leave their agencies.
- **Enhance Employee Skills:** Mentoring provides the opportunity for both mentors and protégés to enhance their skills. Mentors can help their protégés identify methods and tools for focusing their skill development. For example, the mentor may suggest specific training or on-the-job tasks and assignments that could help the protégé to develop his or her skills. Through the mentoring relationship, mentors develop their leadership, feedback, and coaching skills. Mentoring also helps both

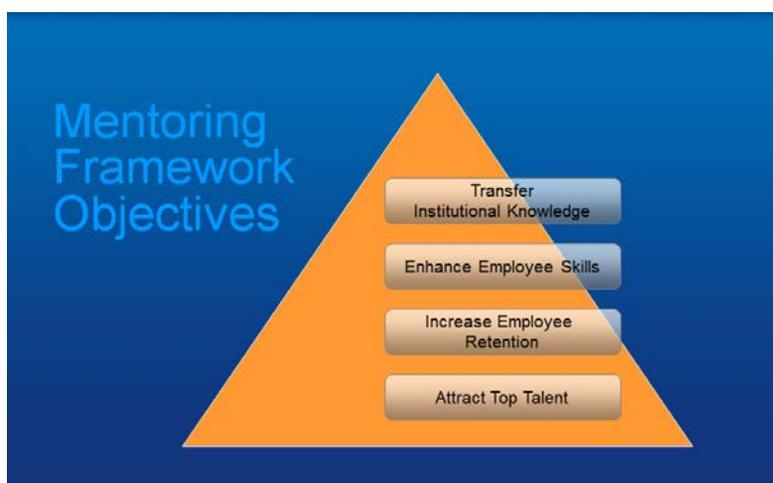
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mentors and protégés to enhance their communication and conflict resolution skills and develop an appreciation for different work styles.

- **Increase Employee Retention:** Mentoring is one way an organization can invest in its people. Mentoring provides all participants with resources and opportunities for achieving their career goals. Mentoring can help new employees envision a long term career at USDA. In addition, mentored employees have stronger commitment to their organization and are less likely to leave.
- **Attract Top Talent:** Mentoring will provide USDA with an avenue to compete for top talent more effectively. Organizations with formal mentoring programs have a competitive edge in attracting and retaining talented employees.

Through these objectives, USDA and its agencies can strengthen its foundation and ensure a pipeline of talented, skilled, motivated employees for succession planning.

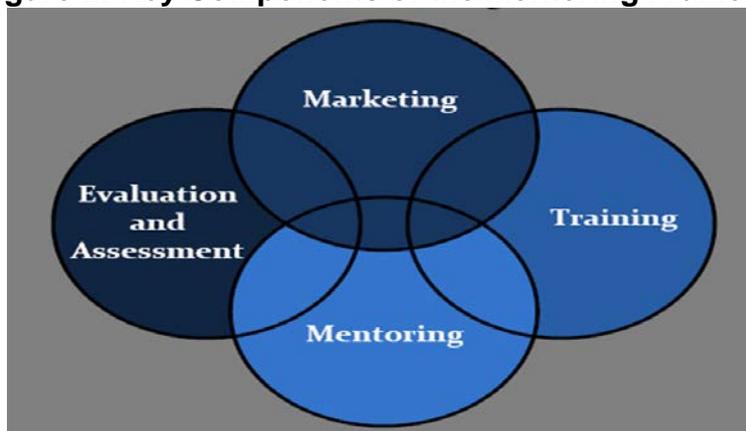
**Figure 1: Objectives of the Mentoring Framework**



### Key Components

Mentoring is comprised of four key components: 1) Marketing, 2) Training, 3) Mentoring, and 4) Evaluation and Assessment. Figure 2, below, describes each of these components.

**Figure 2: Key Components of the Mentoring Framework**



- **Marketing:** For Mentoring to be successful, it will be critical to have active participation of both mentors and protégés. Marketing conducted at the national level for the agency will generate interest and participation in local area programs. A variety of marketing tools, resources and ideas will also be available to Mentoring Coordinators to market Mentoring in their own local areas as they deem appropriate.
- **Training:** All mentoring participants will receive training to ensure that they have a thorough understanding of the purpose, goals, and expectations of the Mentoring Framework. Training will also provide the opportunity to develop critical skills needed to ensure an effective mentoring relationship, and thus, achieve mentoring goals.
- **Mentoring:** A mentoring relationship is a partnership between an employee (protégé) who has voluntarily expressed a need in a developmental area or wants professional developmental opportunities, and an employee (mentor) who is an experienced volunteer with expert knowledge or prior experience to mentor the employee. Mentoring is a vehicle for both the mentor and protégé to develop new skills, knowledge, and experiences that will enhance their careers.
- **Assessment and Evaluation:** The Agency Mentoring Program Managers and local area Mentoring Coordinators will be responsible for monitoring and assessing the progress and effectiveness of Mentoring. Continuous evaluation is critical to the success of Mentoring and helps to maintain credibility by identifying issues and making ongoing improvements to the framework. For agencies that choose to use the USDA Mentoring Portal, it provides an online database with the ability to capture Mentoring's effectiveness via a baseline survey, a mid-survey (6 mos.) and a post-survey (12 months) for mentors and protégés who submit their application's online. The Mentoring Portal will also collect data for required annual Departmental reports. The automatic collection of this data removes the requirement for local Mentor Coordinators to keep side records for annual reporting. All information gathered will help identify what is working well and what may need to change to ensure Mentoring is having the desired impact.

### III. WHAT IS MENTORING?

*If you want one year of prosperity, grow grain,  
If you want ten years of prosperity, grow trees,  
If you want one hundred years of prosperity, grow people.  
—Ancient Chinese Proverb*

#### Definition of Mentoring

men-tor

1. A wise and trusted counselor or teacher.
2. Mentor *Greek Mythology* Odysseus' trusted counselor, in whose guise Athena became the guardian and teacher of Telemachus.

*The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition  
Copyright © 2006 by Houghton Mifflin Company.*

In the Mentoring Framework, mentoring is defined as a voluntary relationship between an employee (protégé) who has expressed an interest in developing new skills or opportunities in a particular area, and a more experienced employee (mentor) who has expert knowledge or experience in the protégé's area of interest.

Mentoring can be used for professional, academic, or personal development, and may be formal or informal. USDA Mentoring provides a formal mentoring approach for professional development.

Mentoring can be an important element in the development of any employee at any level. Mentoring can address the following purposes:

- **Career Development:** To develop an employee in a specific area.
- **Orientation:** To help new employees become acclimated to the organization.
- **Diversity:** To provide diverse employees with the opportunity to form supportive relationships with senior managers.
- **Leadership:** To provide additional support to high-potential employees seeking leadership positions.
- **Relocation:** To provide insight and suggestions for how to make a move to a new geographical location – in terms of positioning oneself for an assignment, learning the skills needed in the new locations, and in knowing what to expect.

- **Changing Career Fields:** To provide insight and suggestions for how to enter a new career field.

Mentoring is a structured process that includes outlined objectives, program training sessions, matching of mentors and protégés based on developmental need and expertise, a collaborative and interactive mentoring relationship, and evaluation and assessment of Mentoring.

Employees who have participated in Mentoring reported the following benefits:

- Gained different outlooks on how to approach situations
- Gained valuable insights and knowledge from the sharing of experiences
- Appreciated feedback-both positive and constructive
- Expanded their networks as mentors helped them to make connections/facilitated introductions
- Were challenged to reflect on and take actions that they would not have done on their own
- Mentors benefited just as much as protégés.

### **Mentoring Roles and Responsibilities**

Mentoring includes the following key roles:

- USDA Mentoring Program Manager
- Agency Mentoring Program Manager
- Mentoring Coordinator
- Protégé
- Mentor
- Supervisor
- Leadership

This section provides a description of each of these roles and its associated responsibilities.

### USDA Mentoring Program Manager

#### *Who is the USDA Mentoring Program Manager?*

The USDA Mentoring Program Manager is the person within the Department who is responsible for providing program management and oversight for Mentoring within USDA. The USDA Mentoring Program Manager will work closely with Agency Mentoring Program Managers in implementing the Mentoring Framework within their agency.

#### *What are the Responsibilities of the USDA Mentoring Program Manager?*

The USDA Mentoring Program Manager provides oversight of development, implementation and evaluation of Mentoring at the Department level for all of USDA. He or she provides input to marketing and training materials, collects evaluation and tracking data to ensure that Mentoring is successful in achieving its stated objectives. He or she provides ongoing support and guidance to designated Agency Mentoring Program Managers and others throughout the Mentoring Life cycle

### Agency Mentoring Program Manager

#### *Who is the Agency Lead Mentoring Coordinator?*

Some agencies within USDA have appointed Agency Mentoring Program Managers. The Agency Mentoring Program Manager is the person who is responsible for providing program management and oversight for Mentoring within their respective agency. The Agency Mentoring Program Manager will work closely with USDA Mentoring Program Manager in implementing the Mentoring Framework within their agency.

#### *What are the Responsibilities of the Agency Mentoring Program Manager?*

An Agency Mentoring Program Manager provides oversight of development, implementation and evaluation of Mentoring at the national level for their respective agency. He or she provides input to marketing and training materials, coordinates the application and matching process, provides ongoing support and guidance to their agency's Mentoring Coordinators and others throughout the Mentoring Life cycle. In addition he or she works with the USDA Mentoring Program Manager to ensure that Mentoring is successful in achieving its stated objectives.

### Mentoring Coordinator

#### *What is a Mentoring Coordinator?*

The Mentoring Coordinator plays a critical role in delivering Mentoring. Each local area (e.g., Agency, State, Center, or Division) will identify a local Mentoring Coordinator. Larger organizations may identify multiple coordinators. Smaller organizations may coordinate their efforts with other organizations in the same geographic location. As a Mentoring Coordinator, you are the person responsible for working with your agency's Mentoring Program Manager and the USDA Mentoring Program Manager. You will manage and oversee Mentoring for your local area. Serving as a Mentoring Coordinator is a collateral duty that requires commitment, but your efforts will provide immediate and long-term benefits to USDA and agency employees.

#### *What are the Responsibilities of a Mentoring Coordinator?*

The local Mentoring Coordinator has responsibility in each phase of the Mentoring life cycle. These responsibilities are discussed in detail as each phase is described in Section IV, *The Mentoring Life cycle*. At a high level, these responsibilities include the following:

- **Managing:** The Mentoring Coordinator is the manager of Mentoring for a local area. He or she will receive guidance from the designated Agency Mentoring Program Coordinator and or USDA Mentoring Program Coordinator. Responsibilities include planning and coordinating marketing activities; participating in matching of mentors and protégés; training mentors and protégés; monitoring mentoring relationships to ensure they are working for both parties; assessing Mentoring effectiveness; and developing improvements.
- **Educating:** The Mentoring Coordinator works with their local leadership and supervisors to be sure they understand the value of Mentoring to their agency.
- **Coordinating:** The Mentoring Coordinator facilitates the local selection and matching of mentors and protégés.
- **Training:** The Mentoring Coordinator ensures mentors and protégés receive the required training. The Mentoring Coordinator also directs mentors and protégés to appropriate resources and answers questions about their specific roles.
- **Problem Solving:** The Mentoring Coordinator resolves any issues or concerns between mentors and protégés by discussing the issue with the mentor and protégé. When necessary, he or she helps resolve conflict with mentoring pairs.

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- **Evaluating:** The Mentoring Coordinator evaluates and assesses the effectiveness of Mentoring and its components, and considers areas for improvement. The Mentoring Coordinator will initiate the mid (6 mos.) and post (12 mos.) program surveys to mentors and protégés if the agency is using the USDA Mentoring Portal.

In addition, part of your responsibility is to keep your agency leadership informed about Mentoring and request their full support to help promote it in their areas.

## Protégé

*Learning is not achieved by chance; it must be sought for with ardor and attended to with diligence.*  
—Abigail Adams

### *What is a Protégé?*

A protégé is someone who wants to enhance his or her professional experience by learning new skills and participating in new opportunities. A key ingredient to a protégé's ability to enhance his or her professional experience is to be receptive to change and open up to new ways of thinking.

### *What are the Responsibilities of a Protégé?*

A protégé should take an active role in the mentoring relationship and take full advantage of the guidance, assistance, and support offered by the mentor. In addition, the responsibilities and expectations of a protégé include the following:

- **Take Responsibility for Personal Growth and Development:** A protégé is ultimately responsible for his or her own personal and professional growth. A protégé needs to take the initiative and be proactive.
- **Commit to the Relationship:** A protégé needs to commit time, effort, and energy in order to be successful. A protégé should strive to honor any agreed upon meeting times, and put forth a strong effort toward achieving the mentoring goals.

### Protégé's Roles and Responsibilities:

- ✓ Take responsibility for personal growth and development
- ✓ Commit to the relationship
- ✓ Develop a vision
- ✓ Work with mentor to develop a Mentoring Plan
- ✓ Seek challenging assignments and new responsibilities
- ✓ Maintain a willingness to learn
- ✓ Listen and be receptive to feedback and suggestions
- ✓ Maintain a positive attitude
- ✓ Ask questions

- **Develop a Clear Vision for What you Want to Achieve After One Year:** A protégé should take the lead in developing a clear vision of where he or she sees himself or herself after the yearlong process, and what he or she hopes to get out of the relationship. This includes a clear vision of the protégé's goals and how achieving them will advance the protégé's career.
- **Work Collaboratively to Develop a Mentoring Plan:** A protégé should work with the mentor to brainstorm ways to accomplish mentoring goals, tasks that will aide in development, and realistic timeframes to accomplish agreed upon objectives
- **Seek Challenging Assignments and New Responsibilities:** A protégé should develop some "stretch" goals and tasks to increase his or her development.
- **Maintain Willingness to Learn:** The mentoring relationship's primary objective is to foster learning. In order to maintain a successful relationship and gain the benefits of mentoring, a protégé must continuously strive to work with the mentor to learn new things, try new tasks, and maintain a desire to grow professionally.
- **Listen and be Receptive to Feedback and Suggestions:** A protégé should provide and receive feedback effectively, consider the message, delivery, and timing carefully before responding.
- **Maintain a Positive Attitude:** A protégé needs to maintain a positive attitude and appreciate the mentoring relationship (and mentor) for its positive attributes. The learning and growth process is not quick and easy, it takes time and can be challenging.
- **Ask Questions:** A protégé should ask questions that will foster thought and curiosity. The mentoring relationship will grow by open communication and exchange of information.

### *Benefits to the Protégé*

Mentoring provides significant benefits to the protégé such as the following:

- Improved performance due to expanded technical knowledge, expertise and skills
- Improved leadership, interpersonal and communication skills
- Greater awareness of organizational processes, relationships and culture
- Expanded organizational network and relationships
- Increased confidence, independent thinking, and self-awareness of strengths and development areas.

### Mentor

*Make something of yourself. Try your best to get to the top, if that's where you want to go, but know that the more people you try to take with you, the faster you'll get there and the longer you'll stay there.*

—James A. Autry

#### *What is a Mentor?*

A mentor is an experienced, well-established employee with a specific skill or knowledge in an area that aligns with the protégé's developmental need or interest. The mentor serves as a role model and provides guidance and support to the protégé with his or her developmental goals.

#### *What are the Responsibilities of a Mentor?*

Mentors fulfill a variety of responsibilities including the following:

- **Share Expertise:** Mentors have gained skills and knowledge of both technical and interpersonal aspects of their jobs, departments that the protégé would like to develop. A mentor is to be a source of information for the protégé to tap into to help him or her acquire the knowledge or skill.
- **Offer Encouragement:** Protégés are experiencing a time where they must learn skills quickly, become acclimated to a new environment, and build new relationships. A mentor should continually use encouragement as a way to motivate his or her protégé to learn challenging new skills and abilities.
- **Motivate:** A mentor should share his or her personal success stories, or similar challenging experiences that they have personally overcome to get to the next level in his or her career. A mentor encourages his or her protégé during difficult times (the learning process usually includes some roadblocks), and offers positive feedback. It is also important to set clear, attainable goals that motivate the protégé to grow and learn.
- **Offer Challenging Ideas:** A mentor encourages his or her protégé to think creatively and step beyond his or her comfort zone. Asking questions is a key



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technique for guiding a protégé in the right direction to find out answers and solutions on their own. Questions are a way to provide guidance rather than giving all the answers. Further, a mentor should set challenging “stretch” goals for the protégé that will help develop critical thinking, problem solving, and advanced skill sets.

- **Trigger Self-Awareness:** A mentor helps the protégé understand his or her own strengths and weaknesses by encouraging the protégé to participate in self-reflection and self-development activities. Asking questions is a valuable tool a mentor can use to steer the protégé to thinking about things in a different way.
- **Support Protégé in Acquiring New Skills and Competencies:** A mentor should work with the protégé to develop his or her developmental goals. The mentor and protégé should work together to distinguish areas for development and identify activities that will help the protégé accomplish his or her goals and objectives.
- **Provide Effective Feedback:** A mentor provides effective feedback to the protégé in a way that reinforces what the protégé is doing well, outlines areas to improve, and provides ideas for how to do so.

### *Mentors Should Not:*

- **Drive the Relationship:** The protégé is responsible for focusing the direction of the relationship, seeking out guidance and feedback, and asking questions. However, particularly at the beginning, a protégé may be intimidated by the mentor’s seniority and be hesitant to take control. It is important for you as the mentor to be supportive, offer help, and contribute to the structure and design of the relationship. The mentoring relationship should be a collaborative effort, not one where the mentor drives and the protégé follows.
- **Seek out a Protégé:** A mentor will not need to seek out a protégé. The Mentor Coordinator will match protégés with appropriate mentors based on developmental need or interest.
- **Work for the Protégé:** A mentor provides the protégé with guidance, insight, and ideas for developmental opportunities. A mentor does NOT do the protégé’s work for him or her.
- **Manage the Protégé/Take on Role of Supervisor:** The protégé has a supervisor, and the supervisor may or may not serve as an **informal** mentor. However, Mentoring provides the protégé with a mentor that is outside of his or her supervisory chain. The mentor is to provide learning and assistance outside of and beyond the role of a supervisor.

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- **Need to Be Experts in all Developmental Areas:** A mentor is not an expert in everything. Mentors are selected because of their experience and expertise, but this does not mean that they are experts in everything related to job functions, their agency and USDA.

### *Benefits to the Mentor*

Mentoring can be a very rewarding experience for mentors. Benefits to the mentor include the following:

- Sharing of technical and organizational knowledge while gaining a fresh perspective
- Demonstrating leadership skills and utilizing interpersonal skills to teach and advise others
- Giving back to the organization for the support received from others in the past
- Intrinsic fulfillment and satisfaction by helping others and enjoying their success with them
- Building a USDA legacy by developing the future of its organizations
- Developing friendships and relationships built on trust and mutual respect
- Gaining fresh perspective and insight from the experiences of employees that are newer to USDA.

## Supervisor

*We must open the doors of opportunity. But we must also equip our people to walk through those doors.*  
—Lyndon B. Johnson

### *What is a Supervisor?*

The supervisor is the person that the mentor or protégé reports to in his or her chain of command. In the Mentoring Framework, the supervisor may **NOT** serve as the formal mentor to anyone in his/her line of supervision. However, the supervisors of both the mentors and protégés play an important role in ensuring the success of Mentoring.

### *What are the Responsibilities of a Supervisor?*

The support and assistance provided by the mentor's and protégé's supervisors is critical to the success of Mentoring. Supervisors should be actively engaged in supporting Mentoring by allowing employees to take time to participate, and securing funds and other resources for mentoring activities.

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A supervisor's responsibilities include:

- Making suggestions for developmental goals
- Respecting the confidentiality of the mentoring relationship
- Providing feedback and support for the protégé and mentor

*A Supervisor Should Not:*

- Oversee the mentoring relationship; this is the function of the local Mentoring Coordinator
- Arbitrarily inhibit the ability of mentors or protégés to attend training or actively participate in mentoring activities
- Expect direct reports to share details of their confidential mentoring discussions

## Leadership

*Who is Leadership?*

Leadership will vary based on the organizational structure of your USDA agency. It may include USDA managers, as well as various agency heads, directors, chiefs and other staff designated to serve in a leadership role.

*What are the Responsibilities of Leadership?*

Support from Leadership is critical to Mentoring success. Leadership is responsible for advocating mentoring, funding Mentoring, and recognizing successful mentoring relationships. Support at higher levels ensures that the necessary resources (time, money, energy) are available to achieve development and learning as well as continued success of Mentoring.

# IV. THE MENTORING LIFE CYCLE

## Overview of the Mentoring Life cycle

Mentoring Life cycle has six phases: Marketing, Application, Matching, Training, Mentoring, and Evaluation/Assessment.

### *Marketing Phase*

The purpose of the Marketing Phase is to promote the benefits of Mentoring and encourage participation in the local programs.

#### *Mentoring Coordinator's Responsibilities*

As a Mentoring Coordinator, you will play a critical role in promoting and encouraging participation in Mentoring in your local area. You will be responsible for marketing Mentoring. You should plan to focus on two types of marketing and communication: preliminary marketing and on-going marketing.

Preliminary marketing includes marketing and communication materials to use to promote awareness of Mentoring and to recruit initial participants on an annual basis. You should work with agency leadership to foster support and ensure they have a clear understanding of Mentoring objectives, activities, timeline, and benefits.

Ongoing marketing and communication will help to ensure Mentoring is working effectively. Monitoring feedback from participants is critical to improving Mentoring effectiveness.

#### *Suggested Marketing Tools*

To assist you in promoting Mentoring, there are several marketing templates and resources available for you to use. See Appendix A, for the *Mentoring Marketing Plan*. You can modify or edit each tool and templates as appropriate to meet the needs of the employees in your local area. These templates and resources are available on the USDA Connect website.

- **Mentoring Portal:** The USDA Mentoring Portal is an online database developed to support the Mentoring Framework. It supports the mentor and protégé application and supervisory approval process, as well as administration of participant surveys and retention of statistical data for required Departmental reporting. Agency Mentoring Coordinators use the Portal to help manage their mentor/protégé pairing, track their training and administer feedback surveys to participants.

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- **Mentoring Framework Flyers:** You can promote awareness on the program, announce annual sign-up period for recruitment, or tailor to recruit mentors. Distribute email flyers to employees or print and display throughout the office buildings in your area. If your office has electronic bulletin boards or billboards, post information on Mentoring.
- **All Employee Letter:** You can send via email a letter to all employees signed by local area leadership promoting the program and announcing the annual sign-up period.
- **Email Announcements/Ads:** You can use general email announcements to target all employees in the workforce to provide Mentoring overview, information on the benefits of participating, and directions to visit the website for more details. Email announcements from agency leadership to supervisors can also be used to describe Mentoring and its benefits, the supervisor's role in the mentoring process, and directions to visit the website to learn more. Additionally, you can encourage supervisors to use email announcements to promote Mentoring and encourage participation among staff.
- **Briefings:** Use briefings to target specific groups such as agency leadership, supervisors, new hires, new federal supervisors, mentor recruitment. A briefing can be used to ensure that information about Mentoring is distributed consistently. As Mentoring Coordinator, it will be your responsibility to ensure that your local agency leadership clearly understands the objectives, timelines, activities, roles and responsibilities of the Mentoring, as well as and what support is needed from them to support Mentoring.
- **Newsletter Articles:** Develop newsletter articles (e.g., Weekly Newsletter, other location-specific/office newsletters) to help you introduce the Mentoring to your employees and build interest.

You should also consider using successful mentoring pairs as examples of the benefits of mentoring to future participants. Perhaps have certain mentors and protégés speak provide their input for future mentoring relationships.

### ***Application Phase***

The Application Phase is the period of time when mentors and protégés can apply to participate in Mentoring. All employees are eligible to participate in Mentoring with supervisory approval. Each agency will have the discretion to decide if students will be eligible to participate in Mentoring. The open and close dates of the Application Phase will vary by agency and local area. Mentors and protégés are encouraged to use the USDA Mentoring Portal to apply for the opportunity to participate in Mentoring at <http://www.eservices.usda.gov/usdamentoring/>

### *Mentoring Coordinator's Responsibilities*

If mentors and protégés have questions regarding how to apply, you will be their point of contact. Mentoring Coordinators can track the status of applications (i.e. approved, denied, pending) from their local area via the USDA Mentoring Portal.

### *Online Application Process*

Mentors and protégés are encouraged to use the USDA Mentoring Portal, an online database to apply for the opportunity to participate in Mentoring. Access the portal at <http://www.eservices.usda.gov/usdamentoring/>

The prospective mentor/protégé will be asked to provide a variety of information during the application process. This information will assist with the mentor/protégé matching process. Some examples of information requested on the application include:

- Education
- Skills
- Experience
- Career/mentoring objectives (protégés)
- OPM Core Competencies of interest
- Interest areas for mentoring (mentors)

In addition, demographic information about the participant (e.g., Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Disability and Veterans Preference) is also requested. The request for information follows Office of Business Management (OMB) data collection requirements. The demographic data is used for strictly for statistical reporting purposes only and is protected. This private information is not accessible by Mentoring Coordinators, or Agency Mentoring Program Managers. Providing this information on the application is optional and is not required to participate in the mentoring program. If a participant fails to provide this information it will have no effect on the processing of their application to participate in the mentoring program.

Applicants for both mentor and protégé opportunities will be required to obtain their supervisor's approval. This approval process will be automated for applicants using the online system. When the application is completed the system will generate an email to the designated supervisor. The supervisor will approve or deny the request to participate in Mentoring. The employee will receive an email notification of the approval or denial to participate. If an employee receives a denial request, they should contact their supervisor to discuss.

As part of the application process, applicants will complete an anonymous survey to help establish a baseline for future evaluation of Mentor program effectiveness. As a local Mentoring Coordinator, you will have the ability to review and access all mentor applications nation-wide for your specific agency.

You will only be able to view protégé applications for your local mentoring area only. Due to the smaller number of qualified mentor candidates for higher graded protégés, it may be necessary to match some protégés with mentors outside of their immediate geographical area. You cannot match a mentor in the system outside of your geographical area or organizational unit or agency. This will require coordination with the other Mentor Coordinator, and will occur outside of the system. Your Agency's Mentoring Program Manager will have access to all the mentor/protégé application information for your agency with the exception of the demographic data. The USDA Mentoring Program Manager can view all applications for all agencies.

### Matching Phase

During the Matching Phase, Mentoring Coordinators will match each selected participant with a protégé or a mentor based on certain factors discussed below.

#### *Mentoring Coordinator's Responsibilities*

As the Mentoring Coordinator you will coordinate the matching process for your local area. You may choose to identify a matching panel (which typically will consist of three to five local leaders who are familiar with the employees), that will help pair each protégé with an appropriate mentor based on developmental area or interest and additional criteria listed in the Matching Criteria. Each local area will determine its own procedure for mentor/protégé matching and or selecting members to serve on a matching panel. The employee will be notified once they are approved and paired to participate in Mentoring.

#### *Matching Criteria*

The decision to match a mentor and protégé will consider the following factors:

- Developmental interest or need
- Developmental goals
- OPM Core Competencies selected by Mentor or Protégé
- Areas of expertise
- Occupation
- Grade level – mentors will typically be at least one grade level above the protégé's grade level, however in some circumstances this may not be feasible.
- Time level commitment
- Duty station

- Line of supervision – mentors may not be in the protégé’s line of supervision.

### Training Phase

The Training Phase is a critical phase in the Mentoring life cycle. Participants will receive training to ensure they understand Mentoring objectives, key components, expectations, as well as have an opportunity to practice key mentoring and interpersonal skills needed to ensure an effective mentoring relationship.

In the Training Phase, both mentors and protégés will be required to attend Mentoring Training. Note - if a mentor or a protégé has received formal mentoring training previously, they may not be required to take the training again. Mentoring Coordinators will determine if they feel the participant should take the training again.

### *Mentoring Coordinator’s Responsibilities*

As a Mentoring Coordinator, you will be responsible ensuring that all mentors and protégés received the required training to participate in Mentoring. Mentoring Training delivery options will be determined by the local Mentoring Coordinator. There are several options on the training delivery. Each local area can decide how they will implement the training sessions. For example, Mentoring Training can be accomplished virtually via webinar, online, or by in-person classroom sessions. It can also be conducted specifically by the role of the participant (i.e., mentor/protégés) or it can be combined for both roles.

### *Mentoring Training*

The purpose of the Mentoring Training is to provide the participants with information, tools, and techniques to assist in developing an effective mentoring partnership. The skills introduced in this training will be skills that you can implement immediately with your protégés and in every day interactions with other employees. In addition, you will be able to apply these skills in a variety of areas both professionally and personally.

The Mentoring Training session will achieve the following learning objectives:

- Describe Mentoring objectives
- Describe the roles and expectations of those participating in Mentoring
- Characteristics of an effective mentor and protégé
- Describe the benefits of mentoring
- Provide effective feedback to protégés
- Describe effective goal setting techniques
- Demonstrate effective problem and conflict resolution techniques
- Manage conflict and resolve problems that may arise
- Apply mentoring techniques effectively

## Mentoring Coordinator Guide

- Assess Mentoring to ensure future USDA Mentoring success

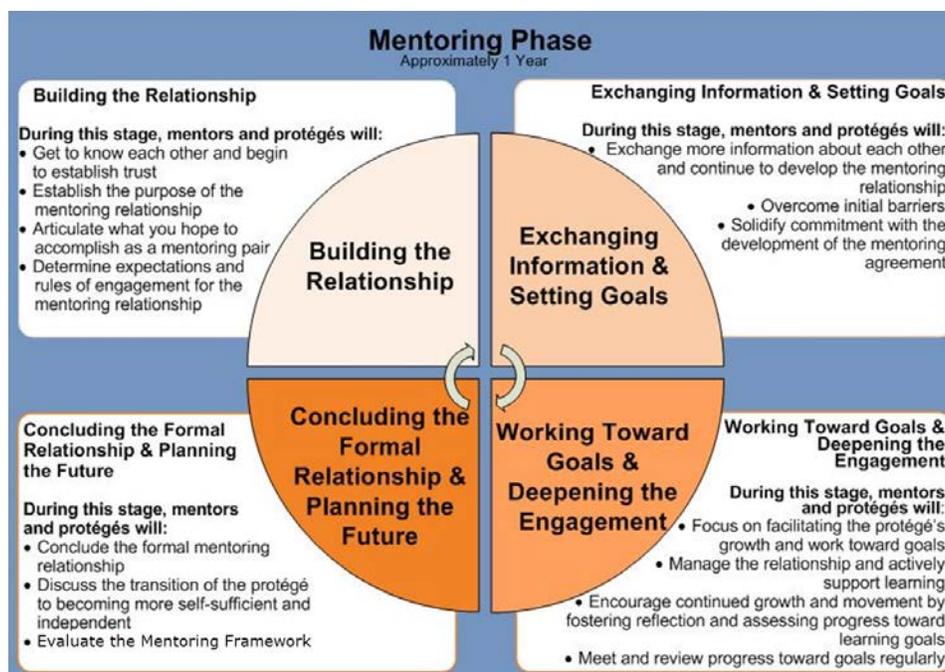
### Mentoring Phase

In the Mentoring Phase, there are four stages of the mentoring relationship: 1) Building the Relationship, 2) Exchanging Information and Setting Goals, 3) Working Toward Goals/Deepening the Engagement, and 4) Concluding the Formal Relationship and Planning the Future. Although the stages typically will proceed in this order, if challenges arise it is perfectly normal for mentors and protégés to take a step back into an earlier stage and then progress again after the issue has been addressed.

There is no strict formula for determining the length of each of these stages. In a year-long relationship, for example, the Building the Relationship stage and Exchanging Information and Setting Goals stage typically unfold during the first three or four months of the mentoring relationship. The Working Toward Goals/Deepening the Engagement stage is the longest of all of the stages. The Concluding the Formal Relationship and Planning the Future stage typically winds down in months eleven and twelve.

Figure 4, below, describes the typical dynamics that occur between mentors and protégés in each stage of the Mentoring Phase.

**Figure 3: Stages of the Mentoring Relationship**



### *Mentoring Coordinator's Responsibilities*

As a Mentoring Coordinator, you will have responsibilities throughout the mentoring phase. During the early stages of the mentoring phase, you should ensure the mentor and protégé have the resources they need and that they have clarified mutual expectations to develop an effective relationship. Mentors and protégés will notify you when they have signed their Mentoring Agreement. In most cases the signed Mentoring Agreement initiates the yearlong relationship.

You may also offer helpful insight or guidance on the structure of meetings, and may occasionally need to help resolve conflict. As the mentoring relationship progresses, you should continue to provide support for your mentoring pairs. Depending on the dynamics and goals of the mentors and protégés, you may need to be more or less involved in the progression of the relationship. Regardless, you should check in periodically with the pairs during the duration of the yearlong Mentoring life cycle. As the Mentoring Coordinator, you will be a resource for mentors and protégés that experience challenges in their mentoring relationship. The descriptions of the stages, below, include some typical challenges that may be experienced during each stage.

At approximately six months, you will use the Mentoring Portal to initiate the mid survey to mentors and protégés. Near the end of the Mentoring Phase, ensure that both mentor and protégé are aware of the end date of the formal relationship and that they understand the steps to end the formal relationship. At the end of the year, you will send the post survey to mentors and protégés via the Mentoring Portal.

At the end of the mentoring year, Mentoring Coordinators are encouraged to coordinate a recognition/celebration activity for the mentors and protégés who successfully completed the Mentoring program. Consider a short program that highlights Mentoring and its benefits. Invite local leadership to attend and congratulate participants on completing their mentoring miles-stones. Participants could share personal benefits of participating in the program. Mentoring Coordinators have the discretion to determine the type of event with consideration of their agency or local area's protocols (i.e. virtual or in-person, formal, or informal and etc.). At a minimum all participants should be given a certificate of completion, to recognize their accomplishment.

### *Stages of the Mentoring Phase*

#### Stage 1 – Building the Relationship

The Building the Relationship stage begins once the mentor and protégé are introduced. During this stage, mentors and protégés will get to know each other. The purpose of this stage is to create a connection between the mentor and protégé, start to build trust, and create expectations for the mentoring relationship.

## Mentoring Coordinator Guide

The first step to building the relationship is to establish the purpose of the mentoring relationship. Mentors and protégés should work collaboratively to clearly articulate what both hope to accomplish as a mentoring pair. Goals should be specific, and articulated as clearly as possible.

### *Building the Relationship Stage Activities*

Activities that take place during the Building the Relationship Stage include the following:

- Initial introduction of the mentor and protégé in person or virtually
- Conduct first meeting of mentor and protégé
- Complete the Mentoring Agreement

### *What to Accomplish During the First Meeting*

The first meeting between mentor and protégé ideally should be face-to-face, if possible. The meeting should set the tone for the relationship and establish expectations and rules to follow. The ultimate goal of the first meeting is to begin building the relationship and finalize the Mentoring Agreement.

- **Exchange Background Information:** To break the ice and create a more open environment, mentors should consider discussing their background with their protégés in detail (as they feel appropriate), as well as their interest in Mentoring. Mentors should also ask their protégés to provide some background information and some insight into their interest in Mentoring so that both understand where each other is coming from and the goals they would like to achieve.
- **Exchange Expectations:** After the mentor and protégé exchange introductions and background information, they should discuss what outcomes they expect from the mentoring relationship. Mentors should strive to understand the protégé's interests and needs, and should discuss the expectations and desired outcomes that both hope to see at the completion of the one-year Mentoring life cycle. Note – some agencies term for the mentoring relationship may be less than a year.
- **Develop Rules of Engagement and Establish Relationship Terms:** It is critical to the success of the relationship to set clear terms and establish boundaries from the outset. Mentors and protégés should answer questions such as what topics or issues fall outside the scope of the relationship; how to deal with confidential information; how to address concerns or problems; how and when to communicate, etc. They should establish an understanding of the time commitment required for the mentoring relationship. The Mentoring Agreement addresses many of these questions.



- **Complete the Mentoring Agreement:** The Mentoring Agreement is a tool designed to facilitate the initial discussions between mentor and protégé, and to coordinate the general expectations, goals, processes and norms of the relationship. The mentor should discuss each topic with his or her protégé thoroughly to prevent conflict or misunderstanding later in the relationship. Thinking through and addressing the issues in writing will help solidify the mentoring relationship. The Mentoring Agreement also serves as a measuring device to gauge the protégé's progress as he or she develops throughout the relationship.

### *Topics Covered in the Mentoring Agreement*

See Appendix A, for a copy of the *Mentoring Agreement* template. The document is provided as a template can be modified to meet the needs of the agency or the individual participants. The sections of the agreement template include the following:

- **Identification of Roles and Relationship Duration:** Distinguish in writing who will be the mentor and who will be the protégé. The relationship will last approximately 12 months.
- **Preferred Form of Interaction:** There are several methods of interacting for mentors and protégé, depending on geographical location. Both mentor and protégé should communicate preferred methods of interaction (e.g., phone calls, emails, meeting at events, meeting at work, etc.) and decide which forms of communication work best.
- **Meeting Frequency & Topics:** Mentors and protégés need to discuss how often they will meet (e.g., weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, etc.), clarify what times/days are not available, and decide when regular mentoring meetings will occur. Additional topics that should be discussed and documented include proposed duration of meetings, who will initiate contact (e.g., for setting up meetings and confirming times and dates of meetings), and agreement on how to notify one another if unable to attend a scheduled meeting.
- **Expectations of Relationship:** It is critical for mentors and protégés to understand what each other expects. Outlining the expectations and desired outcomes from the relationship is important. This way each party will know what to work toward in the relationship.
- **Mentor and Protégé Responsibilities:** To ensure the mentoring relationship is successful, it is important that both mentor and protégé agree to be responsible for their respective roles. The Mentoring Agreement describes several key responsibilities for both mentor and protégé (e.g., feedback, growth, commitment, etc.), and each party should endorse them.

## Mentoring Coordinator Guide

- **Mutual Obligations and Responsibilities:** Mentors and protégés should agree to mutual obligations of conduct and treatment laid out by the Mentoring Agreement (e.g., treating each other with respect, working to resolve conflict, trusting each other, etc.).
- **Developmental Need Description:** This section is intended to outline the areas in which the protégé feels he or she needs the most development, and for the mentor to state some areas he or she believes could use development. Both mentor and protégé should also share some relevant experience and strengths that each believes he or she possesses.
- **Developmental Need Objectives:** Based on the developmental needs, identify the key mentoring objectives.
- **Success Criteria:** Identify desired outcomes that the mentor and protégé will use to evaluate how effectively they have met the mentoring objectives.
- **Success Factors:** Identify what success looks like for the protégé and what it means for desired outcomes to be achieved (e.g., improved skill or ability, position in the organization, increased comfort level with tasks, enhanced competency, etc.).
- **Mentoring Goals and Action Steps:** Mentors and protégés should outline primary goals to accomplish during various timeframes in the relationship (e.g., the first two to four months, the first six months, and for the entire 12-month mentoring life cycle). For each of these timeframes, the mentor and protégé should clearly articulate their goals and action steps.
- **Confidentiality:** It is critical to establish any sensitive or confidential issues at the start of the mentoring relationship. Both mentor and protégé should clearly state issues that are off limits to the relationship and that are to remain confidential within the relationship. They should agree to maintain confidentiality with respect to these issues.

### *How Should the Mentor and Protégé Prepare for the First Meeting?*

The following are some guidelines for how the mentor and protégé can prepare for their first meeting:

- Plan the location and timeframe
- Consider some personal questions that may help the mentor get to know other aspects of the protégé (e.g., interest, hobbies)
- Prepare to share similar personal information
- Prepare an agenda
- Think about a regular time to meet at least once a month.

### *Challenges in the Building the Relationship Stage*

Typical challenges faced in the Building the Relationship Stage includes the following:

- Misconceptions about mentoring
- Difference in expectations
- Lack of chemistry between mentor and protégé
- Hesitancy to be oneself and to be forthcoming when discussing needs and concerns
- Feeling impatient with progress
- Concerns about time pressure from either member
- Poor communication.

### Stage 2 – Exchanging Information and Setting Goals

During the Exchanging Information and Setting Goals Stage, mentors and protégés will exchange more information about each other and continue to develop the mentoring relationship. In this stage, trust between mentor and protégé will deepen. The mentor and protégé continue to get to know each other and overcome any initial barriers. They have solidified commitment with the development of the Mentoring Agreement in the Building Stage.

### *Exchanging Information and Setting Goals Stage Activities*

Activities that take place during the Setting Goals Stage include the following:

- Develop mentoring goals
- Set objective measures
- Finalize the Mentoring Plan
- Clarify focus of their work and begin work
- *Note - If your agency uses the DiSC<sup>®</sup> Behavior Assessments in their local mentoring program, consider discussion the implications of the DiSC<sup>®</sup> Assessment, work styles, and communication styles*

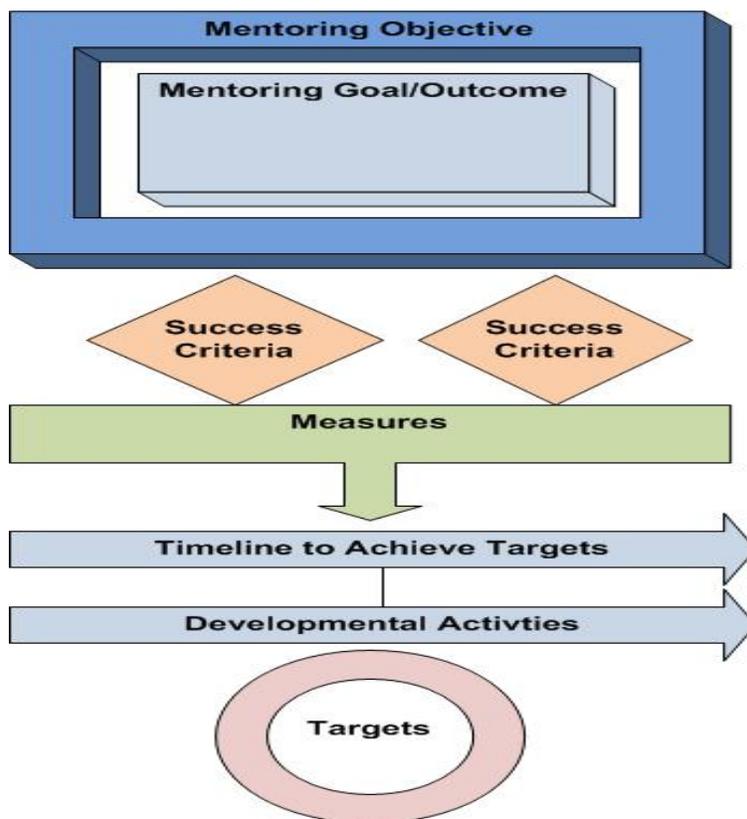
### *Developing a Mentoring Plan*

During the second meeting, the mentor and protégé should work collaboratively to review the mentoring goals and to establish a clear path to achieving success. To help the protégé achieve success, the protégé will work with his or her mentor to develop a Mentoring Plan (see Appendix A for template). The Mentoring Plan will help track and monitor mentoring goals. Mentoring goals will help the mentor and protégé stay focused, see beyond the day-to-day demands of their jobs, and get the most out of the mentoring relationship.

## Mentoring Coordinator Guide

The Mentoring Plan should include the following components, as depicted in Figure 4, below: Mentoring Objective, Mentoring Goal/Outcome, Success Criteria, Measures, Targets, Timeline to Achieve Targets, and Developmental Activities.

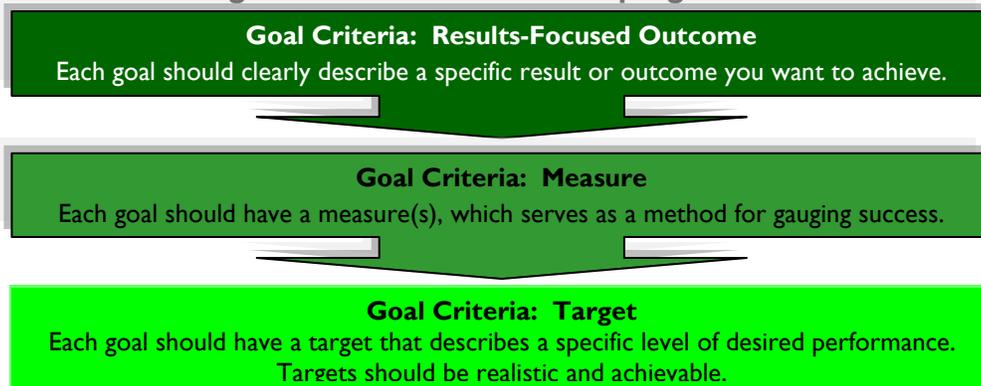
**Figure 4: Components of Mentoring Plan**



### *How to Develop Mentoring Goals*

When mentors and protégés develop mentoring goals, it is important for them to consider the elements in Figure 5, below.

**Figure 5: Criteria for Developing Goals**



## Mentoring Coordinator Guide

Mentor and protégé pairs should regularly review the established Mentoring Plan. They should track their progress toward the mentoring goals, determine if mentoring goals should be revised, and identify next steps.

### *Challenges in the Building the Relationship Stage*

Typical challenges faced during the Building the Relationship Stage includes the following:

- Over-inclination to shut down possibilities
- Resistance to setting goals
- Reluctance to open up possibilities for diagnosis
- Lack of trust and confidentiality between mentor and protégé
- Barriers to communication.

### Stage 3 – Working Toward Goals/Deepening the Engagement

***Example is not the main thing in influencing others, it is the only thing.***  
***—Albert Schweitzer***

The Working Toward Goals/Deepening the Engagement Stage is typically the longest stage in Mentoring life cycle. This stage focuses on facilitating the protégé's growth, working toward goals, deepening the mentoring engagement, and participating in developmental activities.

As the mentoring relationship develops, both the mentor and protégé learn about themselves and each other. This is a highly rewarding phase of the relationship, but challenges can arise.

### *Working Toward Goals/Deepening the Engagement Stage Activities*

Activities that take place during the Working Toward Goals/Deepening the Engagement Stage include the following:

- Strengthen the interpersonal bond
- Manage the relationship and actively support learning
- Maintain the momentum of the learning process by monitoring and evaluating the process
- Encourage continued growth and movement by fostering reflection and assessing progress toward learning goals
- Meet and review progress toward goals regularly
- Create a forum to discuss making progress toward meeting the protégé's developmental needs

### *Mentor-Protégé Meetings*

It is important for mentors and protégés to meet regularly to ensure that the relationship is on track and the protégé is progressing toward meeting his or her mentoring goals. Depending on the relationship, the mentor may discuss a variety of questions and/or topics during meetings with his or her protégé. However, mentors should cover some essential activities at each meeting with his or her protégé. These include the following:

- **Revisiting Expectations:** Mentors should ask their protégés if they are meeting his or her expectations and whether he or she is still satisfied with the relationship.
- **Sharing Feedback:** Mentors should provide their protégés feedback, and ask the protégé to provide feedback. Two-way feedback is important for both mentor and protégé to assess progress and identify areas of improvement.
- **Identifying Conflict or Obstacles:** Mentors and protégés should identify and discuss issues or obstacles. It is best to promote open communication and to address conflicts or concerns before problems develop too far.
- **Reviewing Aspects Of The Mentoring Agreement:** Mentor and protégé should discuss how original time commitments, methods of contact, and other aspects of the Mentoring Agreement are working for both parties.
- **Planning Future Steps:** Mentors or protégés should establish an agenda for the next meeting. Mentors may also suggest relevant readings, activities, and other resources that the protégé can work on or utilize in preparation for the next meeting.
- **Summarizing Key Takeaways:** Before closing the current meeting, the mentor and protégé should recap their discussion, identify any key points or issues, and confirm the details of the next meeting. Mentors and protégés should ask and answer the following questions:
  - ✓ Did we review goals and objectives?
  - ✓ Have we met the objectives?
  - ✓ What did we gain from the meeting?
  - ✓ What was the most worthwhile thing about our meeting?
  - ✓ Is there something we could do to make our next meeting more effective and/or productive?
  - ✓ Are we both clear on our roles in the relationship?
  - ✓ Is there something in particular we want to put on the agenda for the next meeting?
  - ✓ Do we both feel it is worthwhile to continue this mentoring relationship?

### *Additional Topics to Discuss During Mentor-Protégé Meetings*

Additional topics that mentors may address during meetings with their protégés include the following:

- Managing conflict within the office or unit
- Career progression
- Networking
- Influencing others
- Managing politics in the office and organization
- Newest trends in technology
- Time management
- Work/life balance
- Leadership development.

### *Challenges in the Working Toward Goals/Deepening the Engagement Stage*

Typical challenges faced during the Challenges in the Working Toward Goals/Deepening the Engagement Stage include the following:

- Conflict between mentor and protégé
- Competing responsibilities that trump the mentoring relationship
- Changes in the relationship or the protégé's circumstances
- Logistical issues (i.e. proximity of departments, offices, etc.)
- Willingness to share information that will help others
- Lack of support from the senior management.
- Jealousy from colleagues who may perceive protégés as having an unfair advantages
- Protégé's supervisor feeling excluded
- Inappropriate attitude on the part of the protégé or a mentor
- Over-dependence of the protégé on the mentor
- Perception by the protégé that the mentor is being overly critical
- Mentors may stop offering suggestions
- Protégé may be resisting change.

### Stage 4 – Concluding the Formal Relationship and Planning the Future

During the Concluding the Formal Relationship and Planning the Future Stage, the mentor and protégé conclude the formal mentoring relationship and plan for the future. This stage occurs when the relationship is ending or transitioning. The mentor and protégé may have agreed upon a time to end the relationship (a planned ending), may terminate early, or may transition to a different kind of relationship. It is important to know when to end the mentoring relationship.

### *Common Reasons Why Mentoring Relationships End*

Mentoring relationships may end for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to the following:

- The end of the formal agreement or the protégé grows out of the relationship
  - The protégé begins to gain more confidence and starts to perform more independently
  - Mentor and protégé can still remain friends and continue professional contact
- Protégé and mentor have a “falling out”
  - Mentoring relationship is no longer beneficial
  - Reflection and analysis should be employed to discover why the mentoring relationship ended
- Mentor or protégé leaves position or USDA
  - The role of advisor, counselor, teacher, or the other roles may still continue
  - Coming to closure in a mentoring relationship may result in some of the same feelings experienced in other situations involving separation or loss.

### *Concluding the Formal Relationship and Planning the Future Stage Activities*

Activities that take place during the Concluding the Formal Relationship and Planning the Future Stage include the following:

- Plan ahead and anticipate that the relationship will eventually terminate
- Review the ongoing mentoring process
- Discuss the transition of the protégé to becoming more self-sufficient and independent
- Promote the protégé’s continued learning and create support links with other staff
- Conclude the mentoring relationship; allow the relationship to end or evolve
- Determine if the goals were accomplished
- Complete post survey to provide feedback on Mentoring.

### *Challenges in the Concluding the Formal Relationship and Planning the Future Stage*

Typical challenges faced during the Concluding the Formal Relationship and Planning the Future Stage include the following:

- Conflicts that are identified during the evaluation process
- Different expectations as to how the relationship will evolve (if it will evolve)
- Dealing with loss.

### Evaluation and Assessment Phase

This section of the guide outlines the comprehensive evaluation strategy that is employed to evaluate whether Mentoring is achieving its objectives. The overall evaluation includes assessments at all four levels of Kirkpatrick's evaluation model (see Figure 6, below) and measures whether Mentoring is achieving its four stated objectives. See the *Mentoring Evaluation Plan* (Appendix A) for more information about the strategy for evaluating Mentoring.

#### *Mentoring Coordinator's Responsibilities*

As a Mentoring Coordinator, you will play a key role in assessing the mentoring relationship and Mentoring. You will be responsible for working with your Agency Mentoring Program Manager and the USDA Mentoring Program Manager to evaluate Mentoring effectiveness.

The following section outlines the levels of evaluation to conduct, and your role in conducting evaluation and assessment of Mentoring at each of those levels.

#### *Levels of Evaluation*

Figure 6, provides a brief overview of Kirkpatrick's evaluation model, which includes four different levels that can be used when evaluating Mentoring.

**Figure 6: Kirkpatrick's Levels of Evaluation**

<b>LEVELS OF EVALUATION</b>
<b><i>Level 1 – Reaction</i></b> What were participants' opinions about the relevance, applicability, and quality of training and training materials?
<b><i>Level 2 – Learning</i></b> Did participants acquire the intended knowledge and skills?
<b><i>Level 3 – Transfer</i></b> Did participants effectively apply the new knowledge and skills?
<b><i>Level 4 – Results</i></b> What was the impact on achievement of organizational objectives?

### *Methods of Evaluation and Assessment*

The following is an overview of the methods to evaluate Mentoring and your role in conducting the evaluation or assessment. Note – The automated baseline, mid and post surveys applies to agencies who are using the Portal. For agencies that choose not to use the Portal, they will need to administer their own evaluations to measure the effectiveness of mentoring.

- **Surveys:** The application to participate in Mentoring will include a survey that will provide a baseline measurement on different variables, including employee morale (i.e., job satisfaction, perceived fit with the job), intent to leave, and skills the employee hopes to develop through Mentoring. Collecting baseline data will allow the USDA Program Mentoring Program Managers, Agency Mentoring Program Managers and local Mentoring Coordinators to evaluate the impact that the Mentoring has on employee attitudes and behaviors/skills over time.

At approximately six months (or midway) into the mentoring relationship, you should login to the Mentoring Portal to send the notification to mentors and protégés to take their online mid survey. After the yearlong (12 months) mentoring relationship ends you login to the Mentoring portal to send notification to the mentors and protégés to complete the post survey. The surveys include questions that will assess improvements in skill level, effectiveness of the mentoring relationship, transfer of institutional knowledge, developmental opportunities, organizational satisfaction, and the overall value of Mentoring. This information can then be compared to the baseline data collected during the application process, and will be used to evaluate the impact of the mentoring relationship over time. This longitudinal data will help to evaluate the impact of Mentoring, and specifically whether or not the Framework is meeting its objectives.

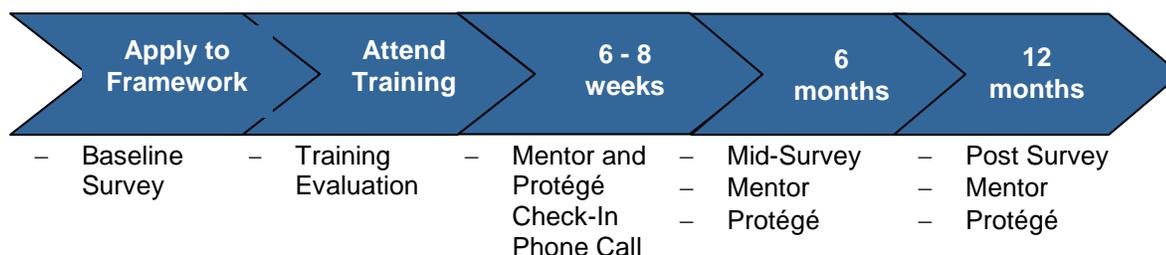
- **Training Evaluations:** Training evaluations measure the effectiveness of the session, and achievement of learning objectives.
- **Periodic Check-ins with Protégés and Mentors:** Approximately six to eight weeks into the mentoring relationship, you should call the mentor and protégé to ensure that they have been in contact, and that the relationship is progressing smoothly. This call is an important step in identifying and addressing any mentor-protégé relationship issues early on.

## Mentoring Framework Evaluation Timeline

Figure 7, below, outlines the timeline for key evaluation activities. As a Mentoring Coordinator, you will perform evaluation activities on a continuing basis conducting check-in phone calls, and administering the periodic surveys.

The date the trained participants sign their Mentoring Agreement is usually considered the official start date of a mentor-protégé relationship, and thus will serve as the starting date for the assessments outlined in this evaluation timeline (e.g., the check-in phone call will occur 6 – 8 weeks after the Mentor and Protégé’s pairing and signed agreement).

**Figure 7: Mentoring Evaluation Timeline**



# V. ENSURING A SUCCESSFUL MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

The success of a mentoring relationship depends on the strength of the relationship that develops between mentor and protégé pairs. The mentoring relationship between the mentor and protégé is a supportive relationship that develops the mentor and protégé by identifying and eliminating barriers to effective performance and career success. Mentoring is a relationship, not an event or a string of discrete events. It is the synthesis of ongoing events, experiences, observations, and thoughtful analyses.

There is no one single answer to ensure and maintain a successful mentoring relationship. To establish and maintain success, your mentors and protégés must consider tapping into many strategies and techniques to find the best fit. Therefore, when a mentor and protégé move through the various phases of the mentoring life cycle, they need to be willing to test out techniques and tap into various resources to maintain the health of the relationship.

- **Develop Rules of Engagement During the Mentor and Protégé's First Meeting:** Developing rules of engagement during the first meeting between mentor and protégé is critical to establish understanding for the entire life of the relationship. For more information on developing rules of engagement, please see the section on the Mentor and Protégé's First Meeting.
- **Ensure Confidentiality:** It is critical that the mentoring relationship is a safe place to exchange ideas, try new and challenging tasks, and provide an outlet for the protégé. To maintain this type of relationship, mentors and protégés should discuss expectations for confidentiality in their first meeting, outline them in the Mentoring Agreement, and uphold them throughout the relationship.

## Key Mentoring Skills

See Figure 8, below for the key mentoring skills that a mentor needs to learn how to apply or effectively demonstrate when working with a protégé. As a Mentoring Coordinator, it will be helpful for you to be familiar with these skills and able to provide coaching and guidance to mentors throughout the mentoring life cycle. You will receive additional information about these skills at the Mentoring Coordinator Training. You will also receive the Mentor and Protégé Self-Assessments developed by Perrone-Ambrose Associates, which provide information about additional critical mentor and protégé competencies.

These skills and competencies may seem straightforward, but they are often very difficult to learn and demonstrate consistently. Each of these skills is necessary for a mentor to implement effectively in their mentoring relationship. As the mentor progresses through the various mentoring phases, he or she needs to be cognizant of them and try to employ these skills whenever possible.

**Figure 8: Key Mentoring Skills**



As a Mentoring Coordinator, keep these skills fresh in your mind, for you might need to guide the mentors and provide help when needed to ensure that mentors understand how to use these skills correctly.

### Listen Actively

***The greatest motivational act one person can do for another is to listen.***  
—Roy E. Moody

Active listening is the most important skill in the mentoring process. Active listening is a way of listening and responding to another person that improves mutual understanding. Often when people talk to each other, they do not listen attentively. They are often distracted, half listening, half thinking about something else. When people are engaged in a conflict, they are often busy formulating a response to the other person. They assume that they have heard what their opponent is saying many times before, so rather than paying attention; he or she focuses on how he or she can respond to win the argument.

Active listening is a structured form of listening and responding that focuses the attention on the speaker. The listener must take care to attend to the speaker fully, and then repeats, in the listener's own words, what he or she thinks the speaker has said. The listener does not have to agree with the speaker; he or she must simply state what they think the speaker said. This enables the speaker to find out whether the listener really understood. If the listener did not, the speaker can explain some more.

### *How to Listen Actively*

The following are some tips for how to listen actively:

- Demonstrate interest and do not make a person feel like they are a burden.
- Serve as a sounding board. Let a person talk with you about exploring career/educational/professional options with limited interruptions.
- Keep a person's confidence. Do not discuss your conversations or any potential problem areas with other employees.
- Make eye contact with when you are talking.
- Paraphrase what the person has told you to confirm what you heard is accurate.

Often, the listener is encouraged to interpret the speaker's words in terms of feelings. Thus, instead of just repeating what happened, the active listener might add a statement like, "I gather that you felt *angry* or *frustrated* or *confused* when [a particular event this happened]." Then the speaker can go beyond confirming that the listener understood what happened, but can indicate that he or she also understood the speaker's psychological response to it.

By demonstrating active listening skills, you will create a positive learning environment to feel comfortable making mistakes when trying to learn new skills and gain new experiences.

Active listening has several benefits. First, it forces people to listen attentively to others. Second, it avoids misunderstandings, as people have to confirm that they do really understand what another person has said. Third, it tends to open people up, to get them to say more. When people are in conflict, they often contradict each other, denying the opponent's description of a situation. This tends to make people defensive, and they will either lash out, or withdraw and say nothing more. However, if they feel that their opponent is really attuned to their concerns and wants to listen, they are likely to explain in detail what they feel and why. If both parties to a conflict do this, the chances of being able to develop a solution to their mutual problem becomes much greater.

## Encourage

***Life is a succession of lessons which must be lived to be understood.***  
***—Ralph Waldo Emerson***

Encouragement is giving someone the confidence to do something. A mentor should offer the protégé encouragement and emotional support to get to the next level or take the next step toward their developmental goal. Encouragement will stimulate them to move forward.

## Mentoring Coordinator Guide

### *How to Encourage:*

The following are some tips for how to encourage:

- Demonstrate kindness and understanding
- Offer approval of their ideas
- Offer help with developmental activities
- Nurture their creativity
- Demonstrate sensitivity
- Remember that going through change can be intimidating and that people do not always possess the everyday knowledge you take for granted

## Support

***There are people who are going through tremendous challenges and experiencing a great deal of fear and uncertainty, and because of what you say and how you say it they will never be the same again.***

***—Les Brown***

Offering support means seizing any opportunity to help someone stay the course and to be a sounding board when needed. Encouragement and support from the mentor is particularly important because protégés will be more willing to take risks and be more comfortable to ask for advice and help. A mentor's support will give them the assurance they need to succeed.

### *How to Support:*

The following are some tips for how to support:

- Give a commitment of your time to help work on goals and obstacles
- Accept someone as they are
- Demonstrate authenticity
- Understand the dynamics of the change

## Guide

***People seldom improve when they have no other model but themselves to copy.***

***—Oliver Goldsmith***

A guide is someone who helps steer someone in the right direction. For a mentor, to be an effective guide, it may not require giving instructions or pointing out the exact way to go. Rather, asking the right questions to get them to figure out what the correct course is on their own. Allow them to find the right solution on their own.

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### *How to Guide:*

The following are some tips for how to guide:

- Lead by example
- Provoke new ideas

## Validate

***Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambition. Small people always do that, but the really great people make you feel that you, too, can become great.***  
— Mark Twain

To validate means to reinforce and confirm. A mentor should validate the protégé. People need to feel good about what they are doing and affirming their goals will help their well-being and drive to move forward.

### *How to Validate:*

The following are some tips for how to validate:

- Acknowledge the potential to succeed
- Demonstrate unconditional confidence in judgment
- Affirm them as a person of worth
- Validate the value in the organization

## Advise

***Tell me and I forget. Show me and I remember. Involve me and I understand.***  
—Chinese Proverb

To advise is to provide information, guidance, and wisdom based on competence and experience. A mentor needs to be willing to listen to their protégé discuss their professional problems. Listening will allow them to come up with good solutions.

### *How to Advise:*

The following are some tips for how to advise:

- Exercise great wisdom
- Normalize the existence of problems and stress
- Reflect the person's feelings
- Offer challenging ideas

- Clarify alternatives
- Facilitate solutions
- Offer consistent advice
- Give honest feedback

### **Manage Change Effectively**

*You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself.*  
—Galileo Galilei

Change means to undergo a transformation or a transition, to lay aside or abandon. Change takes place in every aspect of our professional and personal lives whether we actively initiate the change or not. Initiating and managing change is a fundamental ingredient in mentoring. As protégés experience change, it is the mentors' role to be there for them, to listen, to support, and to encourage them. As a Mentoring Coordinator, you will also be there to support the mentors as they experience change throughout their mentoring relationships. In addition, you will provide your mentors with guidance and suggestions to help them facilitate the process of change for their protégés. Understanding the process of change and the typical responses that occur during the different phases of change will provide needed perspective and help your protégé-mentor pairs stay the course of change and ultimately reap the rewards that change can bring.

There are two types of change. The most common type of change is “incremental change.” Incremental change is usually limited in scope and is often reversible. The other type of change, which is much harder to achieve and accept, is “deep change.” Deep change is an influential component of the mentoring process; therefore, you should be aware of the phases and accompanying emotions associated with this type of change. The following section provides a discussion about deep change.

#### *What is Deep Change?*

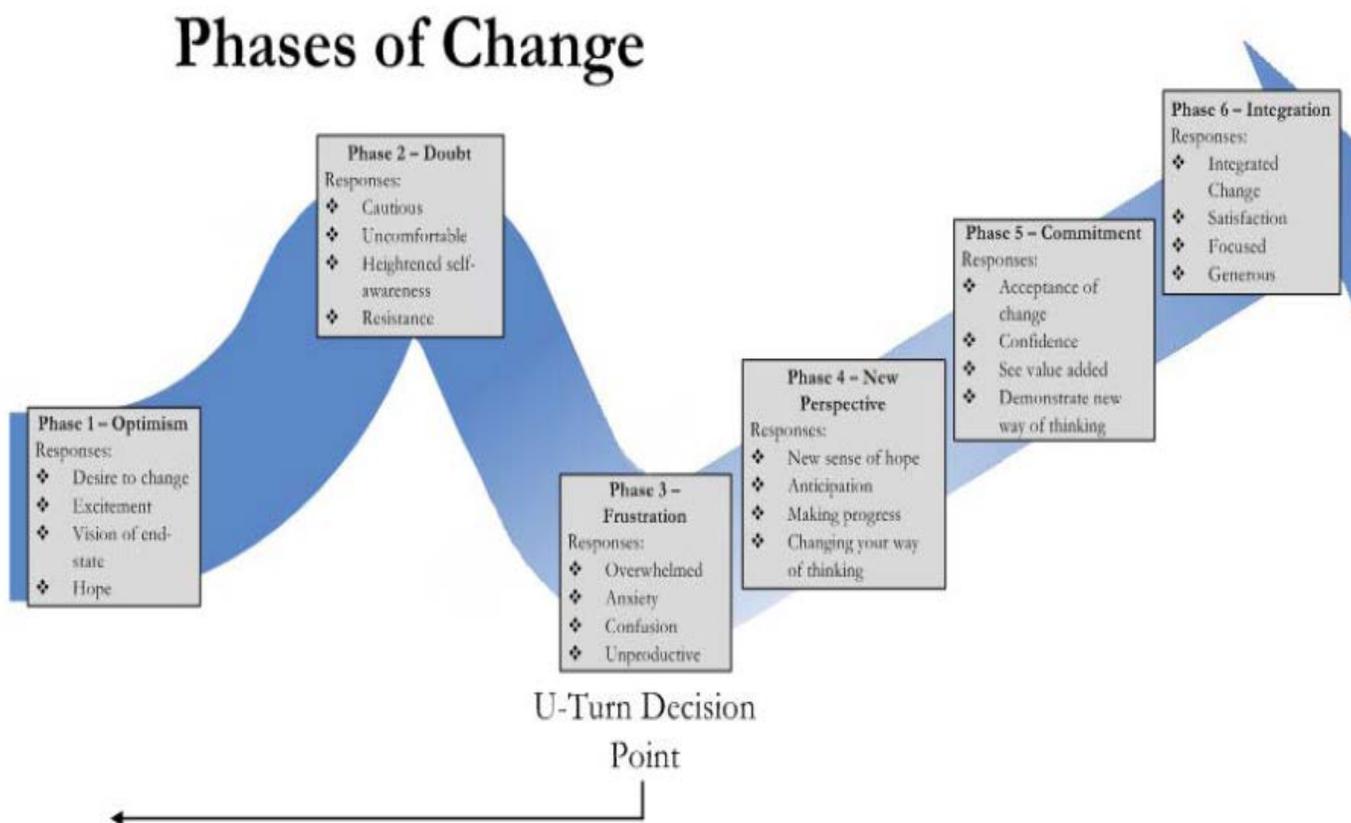
Robert E. Quinn, author of Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within, defines deep change as “change that is major in scope, discontinuous with the past and generally irreversible. Deep change is not easy and requires a commitment to alter our fundamental assumptions, rules, or paradigms and develop new theories about ourselves and our surrounding environment” (Quinn, 1996, p. 7).

As your mentors and protégés go through the mentoring phase, it is important for you to be aware of the typical dynamics they may experience as they go through the various phases of change. Being aware of the typical responses of each phase will help you validate that their reactions are normal, and provide them with perspective and support when needed.

### Phases of Change

The six phases of change are depicted in Figure 9, below and include Optimism, Doubt, Frustration, New Perspective, Commitment, and Integration.

Figure 9: Phases of Change



- **Phase 1 – Optimism:** The first phase of change is Optimism. This can occur when mentor and protégé have initiated change and have a clear vision of how they want to transform or transition during the mentoring process. This phase is full of excitement and anticipation about the prospect of what the change will bring, so your involvement as coordinator will be minimal during this phase.
- **Phase 2 – Doubt:** In the second phase, Doubt, protégés (and occasionally mentors) are receiving a variety of new information that is contradictory to what they know, which can lead to confusion, resistance, and possibly skepticism. Your protégés in particular may experience a sense of doubt about the facts and guidance they are receiving and may question whether the change is right after all. Typical feelings during this phase include caution, discomfort, heightened self-awareness, and resistance.

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It is important that you offer your support to mentors and provide suggestions to help protégés work through this phase in the change cycle. Help protégés understand that this doubt is a normal part of the process, but that they need to persist through some trying times to get the results they would like to see from the mentoring relationship. Have your mentors review goals with their protégés and provide extra support and encouragement during this difficult phase.

- **Phase 3 – Frustration:** The third phase, Frustration, is characterized by anxiety, confusion, and an overwhelmed feeling. Both mentor and protégé are working hard and going through many growing pains to implement change, which can feel frustrating. During this phase, it is important to provide support to your mentors, who may also be experiencing the frustrations of change. If you have mentoring pairs that would like to end the relationship during this phase, be able to discuss this phase and remind them that the change associated with mentoring can be a long and challenging process, but this phase of change usually means that the change will soon reap rewards (if followed through).
- **The desire to end the process can be referred to as the “u-turn” or “decision point.”** This is a pivotal place in the change process. It is a critical decision point as to whether your mentor-protégé pairs will continue the course towards achieving change or whether they decide that they cannot make the change now and decide to turn back.

As Mentoring Coordinator, your main role during change is to guide mentors and protégés through the difficult phases of doubt and frustration and encourage them to continue into the beneficial phase of change, rather than allowing them to give up and turn back at this point in the process.

The last three phases bring about positive change. As Mentoring Coordinator, you will most likely be less involved in these later processes, but should still be aware of them in order to provide insight into the positive change that your mentors and protégés will experience after they have made it through the more difficult phases of change. Your insights into the aspects of positive change can serve as motivational points when you are helping your mentor-protégé pairs through the more difficult times of the relationship and change cycle.

- **Phase 4 – New Perspective:** When your mentor-protégé pairs make it past the decision point, they begin to see the benefits of the change process and make continual strides towards their mentoring goals. During this phase, mentors and protégés begin to see their hard work pay off and have a new sense of hope and anticipation.
- **Phase 5 – Commitment:** In the fifth phase, Commitment, mentors and protégés have accepted the value and benefits the change will soon bring. Protégés in particular may begin to demonstrate a newly-found confidence and demonstrate a

new way of thinking. New skills and behaviors start to emerge, and both mentors and protégés begin to see the value of the change.

- **Phase 6 – Integration:** Once change is fully integrated, mentor and protégé are focused and satisfied.

## Give Effective Feedback

*Experience is the name everyone gives to his mistakes.*  
—Oscar Wilde

Feedback consists of information, data, and insight about an individual's specific actions or behaviors. The purpose of feedback is for mentors to help their protégés improve or take advantage of a developmental opportunity. Effective feedback is a critical aspect of the learning process. There are various types of feedback and feedback methods that can be beneficial to the mentoring relationship and you should make sure that you have an understanding of these types, as well as provide information on feedback to your mentors.

### *Types of Feedback*

There are two primary types of feedback: reinforcing feedback and developmental feedback. The following is a description of these feedback types:

- **Reinforcing Feedback:** Reinforcing with the individual what he or she does well increases the likelihood of repetition, encourages the individual's strengths by acknowledging contributions and accomplishments, and helps to overall builds confidence. Factors to consider when providing reinforcing feedback include the following:
  - Provide feedback often so the person will have a clear understanding of his or her progress.
  - Offer quality, high impact feedback so that the person will appreciate the feedback more.
  - Be specific. Include details on how, when, and why, that will enable the person to understand and focus on the feedback you are giving.
  - Give direct feedback on what you have read or observed. You should not discuss matters you have heard secondhand.
- **Developmental Feedback:** Describing what an individual can do differently to improve results serves to change or improve upon performance and provides or reinforces the individual's awareness of areas needing improvement. Factors to consider when providing developmental feedback include the following:
  - Be descriptive about the behavior

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- Do not use labels such as “immature” or “unprofessional”
- Do not exaggerate
- Do not be judgmental
- Phrase the issue as a statement, not a question

Both types of feedback are critical to the mentoring relationship.

### *Key Tips for Giving Feedback*

Figure 10, below, provides some suggestions on how mentors and protégés can provide more effective and beneficial feedback during the mentoring process.

**Figure 10: Tips for Giving Feedback**

Convey your positive intent	Describe specifically what you have observed	State the impact of the behavior or action	Ask the other person to respond	Focus the discussion on solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Pick a good time</li> <li>✓ Put yourself in a positive frame of mind</li> <li>✓ Briefly state what you'd like to cover</li> <li>✓ Point to a common goal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Be brief and to the point</li> <li>✓ Focus on the behavior or action, not on the person</li> <li>✓ Limit your feedback to one issue at a time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Link the behavior or action to needs of the agency</li> <li>✓ Limit yourself to only one or two consequences</li> <li>✓ Maintain an objective tone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ask the other person for his/her opinion</li> <li>✓ Listen with an open mind</li> <li>✓ If necessary, summarize the other person's key points</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ When appropriate, ask directly for the change you want</li> <li>✓ Avoid coming across as an expert</li> <li>✓ Leave responsibility for action with the other person</li> <li>✓ Manage your own expectations</li> </ul>
<p><i>Conveying positive intent will make it easier for the other person to hear feedback</i></p>	<p><i>State the facts without making judgments or interpretations</i></p>	<p><i>State the behavior to keep the discussion objective</i></p>	<p><i>You need the other person's involvement for constructive feedback to work</i></p>	<p><i>Focus on solutions to move away from who's right and who's wrong</i></p>

### Manage Conflict Effectively

*It is understanding that gives us an ability to have peace. When we understand the other fellow's viewpoint, and he understands ours, then we can sit down and work out our differences.*

—Harry S Truman

When mentors and protégés work together, there are bound to be some disagreements, particularly when individuals differ in attitudes, beliefs, values, or personality. Disagreements and conflict are a natural and inevitable part of human interaction, and can actually end up benefiting the individuals and/or groups involved. For example, a healthy disagreement can stimulate conflicting parties to think in new ways and facilitate a stronger relationship. However, mentors and protégés must manage disagreements and conflicts carefully ensure they do not become toxic.

To manage conflict appropriately, you should understand that most conflict arises from the following underlying causes:

- **Unfulfilled Needs:** In the mentoring relationship, conflicts may arise when either the mentor or the protégé feels that their needs are not being met by the other individual or by the relationship in general.
- **Perceptions:** Every individual brings her or her own unique set of attitudes, beliefs, and history to a situation. Because of this, two different people may perceive the same situation or event quite differently. Misperceptions or differing perceptions can serve to create and perpetuate conflict between a mentor and a protégé.
- **Power:** How individuals use (or misuse) power may be a cause for conflict between a mentor and a protégé.
- **Values:** Conflicts may arise if the mentor and protégé hold incompatible values or do not clearly understand each other's values.
- **Feelings and Emotions:** Emotions can play a strong role in creating and exacerbating conflict. Conflict may arise between a mentor and a protégé if their feelings differ regarding a particular issue, or if they are ignoring their own or others' feelings and emotions.

### *Sources of Mentor-Protégé Conflict*

In addition to understanding the general underlying causes of conflict, it is also helpful to consider some specific factors and situations that may cause conflict between a mentor and a protégé. Conflict may arise in the mentoring relationship for a variety of specific reasons, and some of the most common sources and reasons for mentor-protégé conflict include:

- **Relationship Does Not “Click”**
  - Difficulty forming trust and confidentiality
  - Different career tracks
  - Mismatch of mentor’s teaching style and protégé’s learning style
  - Significant personality differences.
- **Failure To Develop Rapport**
  - Geographic distance between mentor and protégé
  - Lack of time
  - Poor communication.
- **Expectations And/Or Emotions**
  - Unrealistic expectations
  - Misconceptions about mentoring
  - Protégé feeling intimidated
  - Impatience – the relationship can take time to develop and demonstrate results
  - Jealousy.
- **Problems With Protégé**
  - Protégé being overly dependent
  - Protégé has a hidden agenda
  - Protégé is not putting forth enough effort
  - Protégé is resisting change
  - Protégé does not want to listen to your advice.
- **Problems With Mentor**
  - Mentor is over-protective
  - Mentor is cold and distant
  - Mentor not readily accessible.

If at any stage in the mentoring relationship, the mentor or protégé is experiencing significant difficulties or challenges in the mentoring relationship, they may call upon you for assistance, either by helping you to resolve their differences or, if necessary, by matching them with a different mentor or protégé.

### *Conflict Management Styles*

There are many styles and preferences people use to manage conflict. To assist mentors and protégés with managing conflict effectively it is helpful to understand the five conflict management styles when advising mentors or protégés.

While every person uses a different style at one time or another, most people tend to have one dominant style that he or she often uses to deal with conflict. The five most common styles of coping with conflict include:

- 1. Avoidance:** One method of dealing with conflict is to avoid it by ignoring the problem at hand, or by withdrawing from the situation or relationship. While avoidance can be an effective method for dealing with conflict (for example, when the conflict at hand is minor and not worth a large disagreement), avoiding the conflict typically does not solve the underlying issue or problem.
- 2. Accommodation:** Some individuals attempt to keep everyone happy in the face of a conflict. Accommodating individuals may disregard their own interests and let others get their way in order to avoid “rocking the boat.” Like the avoidance tactic, accommodation may be an effective way to handle a conflict in less important or serious situations; however, accommodation is not an appropriate tactic if the issue is at stake is very important to the parties involved.
- 3. Competition:** Individuals who employ a competitive style tend to be assertive, something is wrong in previous sentence uncooperative, and attempt to exercise their power during the conflict situation. A competitive individual’s goals are very important to them, sometimes at the expensive of the relationship and/or the other party involved. A competitive strategy tends to reduce cooperation in a relationship and decrease the ability for the individuals to work together.
- 4. Compromise:** A compromising style is an intermediate style that falls between a competitive and accommodating style. In a compromise, the goal is to achieve an acceptable solution that partially satisfies both parties. Compromise is all about give and take – all parties should receive something, and all parties will need to give up something.
- 5. Collaboration:** With a collaboration style, individuals try to work with one another to find a resolution that fully satisfies both parties involved. This often requires an analysis of the issue at hand to identify concerns and generate solutions that meet both parties’ objectives.

### *Five Tips Mentors and Protégés Can Use to Manage Conflict*

***Communication leads to community, that is, to understanding, intimacy and mutual valuing.***

***—Rollo May***

Following are some basic tips that you can recommend to mentors and protégés to help them manage conflict that arises during the course of the mentoring relationship:

- 1. Communicate:** As noted above, misperceptions are one of the most common reasons for conflict. Encourage mentors and protégés to have continual open communication. Getting the issue out in the open as soon as possible will increase the likelihood of addressing the problem before it becomes a bigger problem.
- 2. Practice active and empathetic listening:** Active listening involves not only listening openly to what the other person is saying, but also paraphrasing and asking clarifying questions. Remind mentors and protégés to check the meaning behind the messages they are giving and receiving.
- 3. Recognize your emotions and express them appropriately:** Remind mentors and protégés to think through how the conflict makes them feel, before they respond. Timing is critical. If they are upset and feel that they cannot keep their emotions in check, they may need to wait until they have cooled down before approaching their partner. In addition, using email rather than discussing conflict in person is not always the best approach.
- 4. Try not to get defensive or provoke defensiveness in others:** Encourage mentors and protégés to be aware of when they typically become defensive so that they can avoid reacting on impulse. Offering a reminder to mentors and protégés not to play the “blame game” when discussing areas of disagreement can be very useful.
- 5. Take a solution-oriented approach and be open to compromise:** Consider how your conflict might be resolved. Although there may be disagreement about some topics, there are likely to be topics that people can agree with. Encourage mentors and protégés to try to find these areas of agreement.

# APPENDIX A: TOOLS AND RESOURCES

This appendix includes the following tools and resources described in the Mentoring Coordinator Guide. The various templates can be customized to meet the needs of the mentor and protégé.

- Mentoring Marketing Plan
- Mentoring Evaluation Plan
- Mentoring Coordinator Checklist
- Mentoring Agreement Template
- Mentoring Plan Template
- Mentor Checklist Template
- Protégé Checklist Template
- Understand Behavioral Strengths and Developmental Areas (DiSC®)
- Frequently Asked Questions
- References for More Information

## MENTORING EVALUATION PLAN

TOOL	OBJECTIVE AND CONTENT	TIMEFRAME	KEY ROLES
<b>Baseline Survey (linked to application form)</b>	Collect baseline metrics from Mentoring participants to be used to measure impact/ results of Mentoring.  Content may include questions related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Morale (satisfaction, commitment, perceived fit)</li> <li>• Intent to leave</li> <li>• Development/promotion opportunities</li> <li>• Skills participants hope to develop through the mentoring relationship; and self-assessed level of skill in these areas at time of application</li> </ul>	At time of application to Mentoring	Data is collected by the Mentoring Portal
<b>Training Participant Evaluation</b>	To assess mentoring training (classroom, virtual or webinar)  Content includes questions related to satisfaction as applicable with and/or perceived usefulness of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course materials</li> <li>• Learning environment</li> <li>• Instructor</li> <li>• Training delivery</li> <li>• Achievement of learning objectives</li> <li>• Open ended questions including suggestions for improvement and additional training needs</li> </ul>	Survey administered after training	– Trainer administers survey
<b>Mentor/Protégé Check-In Phone Call</b>	To conduct an early “check-in” of the mentoring relationship.  Content includes questions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure relationship is going smoothly</li> <li>• Gauge frequency and nature (e.g., email, in person, etc.) of interactions</li> </ul>	6-8 weeks (after pairing and signed agreement)	Mentoring Coordinator conducts call and records relevant information

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TOOL	OBJECTIVE AND CONTENT	TIMEFRAME	KEY ROLES
<b>Mentor and Protégé Mid and Post Surveys</b>	<p>Gather data from the mentor and protégé on the progress of relationship, effectiveness of Mentoring Framework, and success in meeting Framework objectives.</p> <p>Content includes questions related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality of/satisfaction with interactions</li> <li>• Progress towards achieving set goals</li> <li>• Skill increase and confidence in identified developmental areas</li> <li>• Transfer of institutional knowledge</li> <li>• Perceived usefulness of Framework and relationship</li> <li>• Satisfaction with partner/relationship/ framework</li> <li>• Job satisfaction, adjustment, fit and other morale variables</li> <li>• Turnover intent</li> <li>• Promotion opportunity/movement</li> <li>• Satisfaction with the overall Mentoring Framework in achieving its stated objectives</li> <li>• Strengths and weaknesses of Mentoring</li> <li>• Suggestions for improving Mentoring</li> <li>• Satisfaction with Mentoring</li> </ul>	6 months and 1 year	Mentoring Coordinator triggers the surveys via the Mentoring Portal

## MENTORING MARKETING PLAN

### Introduction

Marketing and Communications Plan was developed to assist agencies in implementing the Mentoring Framework (Mentoring). The broad aim of the marketing and communications plan is to:

1. To assist in the development of marketing Mentoring and communicating within an organization
2. Provide suggestions for marketing tools/materials/guidance

<b>WHAT</b>	<p>A Mentoring Framework has been developed that will offer USDA employees the opportunity to further their professional development by learning new skills and sharing experiences and knowledge with fellow employees. The specific goals of the Mentoring Framework include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful transfer of USDA institutional knowledge</li> <li>• Enhancement of employee skills</li> <li>• Increased employee retention</li> <li>• Attraction of top talent</li> </ul> <p>Furthermore, the Mentoring Framework will strengthen the foundation of USDA and its agencies by ensuring a pipeline for organizational succession planning.</p> <p>Mentoring will be implemented and delivered at the agency level by Agency Mentoring Program Manager and local Mentoring Coordinators. The Mentoring Coordinators will be responsible for marketing Mentoring, coordinating logistics, training participants and managing the program at the local level.</p> <p>This Marketing Plan focuses on two phases of marketing and communication endeavors: 1) <i>Preliminary Marketing and Communication</i> materials needed to advertise and promote awareness and initial participation in Mentoring; and 2) <i>Ongoing Marketing and Communication</i> necessary for continued Mentoring awareness, participation and updates.</p>
<b>WHY</b>	<p><i>Preliminary Marketing Objectives:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generate support for Mentoring with key support groups (e.g., Agency Leadership, Supervisors, Training Officers, Mission Area Human Resources Directors, etc.)</li> <li>• Promote initial awareness and participation by employees in Mentoring</li> <li>• Ensure a clear understanding of Mentoring objectives, activities, timeline and benefits to key support and employee participant groups</li> </ul> <p><i>Ongoing Marketing Objectives:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain support for Mentoring with key support groups (e.g., Agency Leadership, Supervisors, Training Officers, Mission Area Human Resources Directors, etc.)</li> <li>• Promote continued awareness and participation by employees, including additional specific audiences (e.g., new employees, new federal supervisors, interns, students etc.) in Mentoring</li> <li>• Ensure a clear understanding of Mentoring objectives, activities, timeline and benefits to key support and employee participant groups</li> <li>• Provide updates on Mentoring progress, agency impacts and opportunities to provide feedback to improve Mentoring</li> </ul>

# Mentoring Coordinator Guide

WHO	Targeted Audience	Key Messages	Tools/Methods
	Agency: Leadership/Supervisors	<p><i>Preliminary:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High level overview summary of Mentoring with emphasis on benefits to gain support</li> <li>• Mentoring lifecycle/timeline</li> <li>• Key points of contact</li> </ul> <p><i>Ongoing:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress and agency impact updates</li> <li>• Opportunity to provide feedback about Mentoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefing</li> <li>• Email announcements/ads</li> <li>• Mentoring Portal</li> <li>• Electronic Flyer</li> <li>• Newsletter</li> <li>• Advertisements (i.e., my.USDA, agency Intranet's)</li> <li>• Progress and updates during Agency Leadership meetings</li> </ul>
	Employees: Career Entry, Mid-Career, Senior/Experienced	<p><i>Preliminary:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring overview</li> <li>• Benefits of participating</li> <li>• Application and mentoring lifecycle/timeline information</li> <li>• Key points of contact</li> </ul> <p><i>Ongoing:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring alerts and reminders regarding Mentoring activities/timeline</li> <li>• Opportunity to provide feedback about Mentoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email announcements/ads</li> <li>• Mentoring Portal</li> <li>• Electronic Flyer</li> <li>• Newsletters/ Advertisements (i.e., my.USDA, USDA Connect, agency Intranet's)</li> </ul>
	Interns/Students	<p><i>Preliminary:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring overview</li> <li>• Benefits of participating as an entry-level employee to attract top student talent after graduation</li> <li>• Application and mentoring lifecycle/timeline information</li> <li>• Key points of contact</li> </ul> <p><i>Ongoing:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reminder email announcements and marketing brochures/flyers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted student brochure or flyer</li> <li>• Mentoring Portal</li> <li>• Email announcements/ads</li> </ul>
	Potential employees and new employees	<p><i>Preliminary:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring overview</li> <li>• Benefits of participation</li> <li>• Application and mentoring lifecycle/timeline information</li> <li>• Key points of contact</li> </ul> <p><i>Ongoing:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reminder email announcements and marketing brochures/flyers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted potential employee/ new employee brochure/pamphlet</li> <li>• Mentoring Portal</li> <li>• Email announcements/ads</li> </ul>

# Mentoring Coordinator Guide

<b>KEY ASSUMPTIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Example Templates are available for Agency and local Mentoring Coordinators to tailor to promote Mentoring in their local area. Use of these materials is not required, however is highly encouraged as it will support the delivery of a consistent message on the USDA Mentoring Framework to employees</li> <li>• Mentoring Coordinators can consult Public Affairs Specialist for assistance in tailoring and development of marketing materials for distribution to their employees</li> <li>• Mentoring Coordinators should ensure they follow their agency protocols for approval and distribution of marketing material</li> <li>• The USDA Connect website will host marketing and communication templates and materials for Mentoring Coordinators to download</li> </ul>
<b>WHEN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Preliminary Marketing and Communication should be used Initially to announce an agency's participation in Mentoring, or annually to announce annual Mentoring sign-up period and activities</i></li> <li>• <i>Ongoing Marketing and Communication should take place throughout the year to maintain interest and build awareness of Mentoring</i></li> </ul>

## Proposed Marketing Tools/Materials

Marketing Tools	Message(s)	Audience(s)	Notes
<b>USDA Mentoring Sites</b>			
USDA Mentoring Portal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring overview information</li> <li>• Program benefits</li> <li>• FAQs</li> <li>• Agency Contact information</li> <li>• How to apply (with link to application)</li> </ul>	All (e.g., interested participants, Supervisors, Agency leadership, Mentoring Coordinators, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preliminary/initial promotion and ongoing</li> <li>• Will be used from year to year to promote Mentoring and Manage participants</li> </ul>
USDA Connect Mentoring Community – provides ongoing and two-way communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updates on Mentoring</li> <li>• Notifications of upcoming activities</li> <li>• Mentoring overview information</li> <li>• Program benefits</li> <li>• FAQs</li> <li>• Opportunity to share insights on challenges &amp; successes</li> </ul>	All (e.g., Mentoring Coordinators, interested participants, Supervisors, Agency leadership, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preliminary/initial promotion and ongoing</li> </ul>
<b>Email Announcements/ Ads</b>			
General email announcement to all employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring overview information/ benefits</li> <li>• Direction to visit Mentoring Portal for more details</li> </ul>	General workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use to announce “new” program or,</li> <li>• Tailor and used in ongoing/ follow-up marketing</li> </ul>
Specific email announcement from Agency Leadership to Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring overview information/ benefits</li> <li>• Supervisor’s role in mentoring process</li> <li>• Directions to visit Mentoring Portal for more details</li> </ul>	From Agency Leadership to Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use to announce “new” program or,</li> <li>• Tailor and used in ongoing/ follow-up marketing</li> </ul>

# Mentoring Coordinator Guide

Marketing Tools	Message(s)	Audience(s)	Notes
<p>Specific email announcements that supervisors can send to their Staff at each career level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Supervisors</li> <li>• Career Entry</li> <li>• Mid-Career</li> <li>• Senior/Experienced</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring overview information</li> <li>• Benefits of participating for each targeted career group.</li> <li>• Directions to visit Mentoring Portal for more details</li> </ul>	<p>From Supervisors to Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Supervisors</li> <li>• Career Entry</li> <li>• Mid-Career</li> <li>• Senior/Experienced</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use to announce “new” program or,</li> <li>• Tailor and used in ongoing/ follow-up marketing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Electronic Newsletters, Flyer, Brochures</b> – Send electronically, or copies printed to post on bulletin boards</p>			
<p>Develop various newsletters for distribution within agency as applicable e.g., National Bulletin, Weekly Newsletter, State Newsletter, other location-specific/office newsletters</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring overview information/ benefits</li> <li>• Directions to visit Mentoring Portal for more details</li> </ul>	<p>Dependent on newsletter but information could be general enough to apply to all audiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use to announce “new” program or,</li> <li>• Tailor and used in ongoing/ follow-up marketing</li> </ul>
<p>Flyer/Brochure for specific groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential Employees &amp; New Hire Orientation</li> <li>• Students/Interns</li> <li>• Mentor Recruitment</li> <li>• General Workforce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring overview information</li> <li>• Benefits for each targeted group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Potential Employees &amp; New Hire Orientation</li> <li>○ Students</li> <li>○ Targeted Outreach Organizations</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Directions to visit Mentoring Portal for more details</li> </ul>	<p>Dependent on targeted audience. Tailor message to meet specified audience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use to announce “new” program or,</li> <li>• Tailor and used in ongoing/ follow-up marketing</li> </ul>
<p>Flyer/General Flyer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring overview information/ benefits</li> <li>• Directions to visit Mentoring Portal for more details</li> </ul>	<p>General workforce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use to announce “new” program or,</li> <li>• Tailor and used in ongoing/ follow-up marketing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Briefings</b></p>			
<p>Briefings targeted at specific groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agency Leadership</li> <li>• Supervisors</li> <li>• General Workforce</li> <li>• Mentor Recruitment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring overview information</li> <li>• Benefits for participants and benefits to the organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Agency Leadership</li> <li>○ Supervisors</li> <li>○ General Workforce</li> <li>○ Mentor Recruitment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Directions to visit Mentoring Portal for more details</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agency Leadership</li> <li>• Supervisors</li> <li>• General Workforce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use to announce “new” program or,</li> <li>• Tailor and used in ongoing/ follow-up marketing</li> <li>• Invite past participants to share their positive experiences with Mentoring</li> </ul>

## MENTORING COORDINATOR CHECKLIST (TEMPLATE)

Mentoring Coordinator Checklist	
Activity	Complete
<b>Marketing Phase</b>	
Utilize and distribute marketing and communication materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Edit the marketing tools to best meet the needs of the employees in your area</li> <li>▪ Send out preliminary promotion materials</li> <li>▪ Conduct informational briefings on Mentoring</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Continued marketing and recruitment of Mentoring	<i>ongoing</i>
<b>Application and Matching Phase</b>	
Respond to questions regarding the application process	<i>ongoing</i>
Track the status of applications	<i>ongoing</i>
Coordinate the matching process	<input type="checkbox"/>
Notify candidates of the status of their applications	<input type="checkbox"/>
Notify the employee and supervisor that the employee has been accepted to participate in Mentoring	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Training Phase</b>	
Ensure mentors/protégés receive Mentoring Training	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Mentoring Phase</b>	
Ensure the Mentoring Agreement was signed by paired mentors and protégés	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check-in with mentors and protégés (approximately 6-8 weeks into the mentoring relationship)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Send mid survey (6 month) to mentors/protégés via Mentoring Portal	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evaluation Phase	
Conduct periodic check-ins with mentors (e.g., monthly or quarterly)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Send post survey (12 months) to mentors/protégés via Mentoring Portal	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coordinate celebration/recognition activity for mentors/protégés who completed the year long relationship	<input type="checkbox"/>

### MENTORING AGREEMENT (TEMPLATE)

#### Purpose of the Mentoring Agreement

The Mentoring Agreement is a tool designed to facilitate the initial discussions between mentor and protégé and to coordinate the general expectations, goals, processes and norms of the relationship. It is recommended that you discuss each topic thoroughly in order to prevent conflict or misunderstanding later in the relationship. Thinking through and addressing the issues by writing in the spaces provided will help to solidify the mentoring relationship. The Mentoring Agreement also serves as a measuring device to gauge your progress as you develop through the relationship.

#### Identification of Roles and Relationship Duration

This is a voluntary agreement between \_\_\_\_\_ (mentor), and \_\_\_\_\_ (protégé), and will last for approximately 12-months. We would like this to be an enriching, rewarding experience with most activities completed in an effort to progress both of us in our career development. The following highlights our mutually agreed upon terms and conditions for making this relationship successful.

#### Preferred Form of Interaction (select all that apply)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Phone Calls                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Emails            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting at or near Workplace | <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting at Events |

Protégé preferred communication style:

Mentor preferred communication style:

## Meetings/Frequency & Topics

**How often shall we meet:**

- |                                    |                                     |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly    | <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-weekly  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly   | <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-monthly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly |                                     |

**These are the specific days and hours that we are not available?**

**Our regular mentoring meeting will occur:**

**Our meetings will last approximately (in hours):**

**Contact will be initiated by:**

**We agree to notify one another in advance of an inability to attend a scheduled meeting.**

*Agree (please mark box)*

Mentor

Protégé

## Expectations of Relationship

**What do we expect from each other?**

*Protégé's expectations of the mentor:*

*Mentor's expectations of the protégé:*

### What do we expect to gain from the relationship?

*Protégé's expectations:*

*Mentor's expectations:*

### Mentor and Protégé Responsibilities

To make our mentoring relationship successful, I agree to be responsible for:

#### **Mentor**

- |   | <b>Agree</b>             |
|---|--------------------------|
| Trusting my protégé to be a mature professional.                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Trusting my protégé to be serious about their development.                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Letting my protégé make his/her own decisions and set his/her priorities. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Focusing on meeting my protégé's needs and not my own.                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Placing mentoring as a high priority professional responsibility.         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Providing open, honest and effective feedback.                            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Receiving feedback in a constructive manner.                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |

#### **Protégé**

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| Trusting that my mentor is concerned with my professional development. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Taking responsibility for my own learning and growth.                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dealing with the consequences of my decisions.                         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Setting my own career goals based on my own values.                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Integrating my mentor's constructive comments in my work.              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Requesting assistance only in professional, not personal, matters.     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Providing open, honest and effective feedback.                         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Receiving feedback in a constructive manner.                           | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## Mentoring Coordinator Guide

### Mutual Obligations and Responsibilities

**Both parties of the mentoring relationship should agree to the following mutual obligations of conduct and treatment of the other party. I agree to:**

	<i>Mentor</i>	<i>Protégé</i>
Treat my mentoring partner with respect	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make our meetings and time together as effective as possible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work with my mentoring partner to resolve any conflicts/disputes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trust the judgment of my mentoring partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work collaboratively to meet goals and objectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Developmental Need Description

**The areas I feel need the most development through engaging in this mentoring relationship include the following:**

*Protégé's Needs:*

*Mentor's Needs:*

**Since mentoring relationships involve exposure to different perspectives and lines of thought, the areas of my experience that fill me with a sense of pride and those that I may consider sharing with my mentoring partner include:**

*Protégé's Experience:*

*Mentor's Experience:*

## Mentoring Coordinator Guide

### Developmental Need Objectives

**In relationship to the developmental needs described above, identify your key mentoring objectives:**

*Protégé's Objectives:*

*Mentor's Objectives:*

### Confidentiality

**Any sensitive issues that we discuss will be held in confidence. Issues that are off-limits in this relationship include:**

(Note: Mentors and protégés have a responsibility to report any issues that will violate USDA or agency policy, e.g., harassment and discrimination.)

Both mentor and protégé should be committed to open and honest communication in the mentoring relationship. All advice and information provided is given to encourage professional development and should be taken with such a regard. This agreement remains in effect throughout the entire mentoring relationship of 12 months. Although it is hoped that both parties will find the process rewarding, either the mentor or protégé may terminate the agreement at any time.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**PROTÉGÉ**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**MENTOR**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**MENTORING PLAN (TEMPLATE)**

<b>Protégé Name:</b>		<b>Mentor Name:</b>
<b>Mentoring Objective:</b>		
<b>Mentoring Goal/Outcome:</b>		
<b>Success Criteria:</b>		
<b>Measures:</b>		
<b>Timeline to Achieve Targets:</b>		
<b>Developmental Activities:</b>		
<b>Targets:</b>		

### MENTOR CHECKLIST TEMPLATE

The mentor checklist is designed to be a resource that mentors can use to keep track of the required activities that need to be completed during the Mentoring life cycle.

<b>Mentor Checklist</b>	
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Complete</b>
Attend Mentoring Training	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish your own goals for the mentoring relationship	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conduct Mentor and Protégé First Meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>If used in your agency - Complete the DiSC<sup>®</sup> Assessment –Review DiSC<sup>®</sup> Assessment results</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete Mentoring Agreement and Notify Mentoring Coordinator when Mentoring Agreement is signed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work with Protégé to develop their Mentoring Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete the online mid survey (6-months) via the Mentoring Portal	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete the online post survey (12-month) via the Mentoring Portal	<input type="checkbox"/>
At end of mentoring year, participate in celebration/recognition activity	<input type="checkbox"/>

## PROTÉGÉ CHECKLIST TEMPLATE

The protégé checklist is designed to be a resource that you can use to keep track of the required activities that need to be completed during the Mentoring life cycle.

Protégé Checklist	
Activity	Complete
Attend Mentoring Training	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish your own goals for the mentoring relationship	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conduct Mentor and Protégé First Meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete Mentoring Agreement and Notify Mentoring Coordinator when Mentoring Agreement is signed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop your Mentoring Plan – seek guidance from Mentor	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>If used in your agency - Complete the DiSC<sup>®</sup> Assessment –Review DiSC<sup>®</sup> Assessment results</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete the online mid survey (6-months) via the Mentoring Portal	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete the online post survey (12-month) via the Mentoring Portal	<input type="checkbox"/>
At end of mentoring year, participate in celebration/recognition activity	<input type="checkbox"/>

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### **What is the Mentoring Framework?**

The Mentoring Framework (Mentoring) provides consistent guidance for mentoring programs throughout the USDA.

Mentoring provides employees with opportunities to develop new knowledge, skills or experience. Mentoring's aim is to broaden employee functional experience, assist in developing goals, and cultivate new opportunities.

#### **How is a mentor-protégé partnership formed?**

Each local area will decide how they will match mentors and protégés. Some may choose to identify a matching panel to match mentors and protégés. Matching criteria will include such factors as the developmental interests and goals, expertise, and applicant skills.

#### **How long does the mentoring relationship last?**

The formal mentoring relationship lasts approximately one year.

#### **How much time is involved if I participate in Mentoring?**

Mentoring lasts approximately one year. The frequency of how often a mentor and protégé meet depends entirely on the developmental interests of the protégé and mentor.

The mentor and protégé will work collaboratively to set mentoring expectations, goals, frequency, and method of meetings.

#### **How do I apply to be either a protégé or a mentor?**

Each local Mentoring Coordinator will determine the timeframe for the annual sign-up to participate in Mentoring. It is suggested that employees also visit with their supervisor about their desire to participate in Mentoring. To apply to participate in Mentoring as either a protégé or a mentor you will need to complete an online application via the USDA Mentoring Portal. Visit <http://www.eservices.usda.gov/usdamentoring/> to view and complete the online application. All applicants will require supervisory approval before they can participate.

### **What is expected of a mentor?**

Above all, be committed to the relationship and maintain confidentiality. As a mentor, focus on your protégé's professional development (e.g., career planning, people skills, etc.). Even though client constraints will sometimes hinder you from meeting with your protégé, you should attend scheduled meetings—or at least give fair warning when you cannot.

Do not share the items discussed with your protégé with your co-workers. Immediately raise any issues that will violate policy, e.g., harassment and discrimination with the appropriate person (i.e., Human Resources, Equal Employment Office, Employee Relations, etc.).

### **What is a Mentoring Coordinator?**

The Mentoring Coordinator is the main point of contact for any questions regarding Mentoring in your local area. Refer to your local Mentoring Coordinator with any questions. If you need assistance navigating around any roadblocks that might occur in the mentoring relationship, please contact your local Mentoring Coordinator.

### **How much can participating in Mentoring as a protégé really help me?**

It is relative, of course. You are driving the relationship, so you are responsible for gaining as much information and guidance as possible for your career development; it is up to you to make it work to your advantage. Come to each meeting with an agenda (maybe five topics to discuss), thus optimizing the time you spend with your mentor.

Anyone with significant experience is going to have an array of interesting and important things to say. In addition, your mentor has gone through a selection process to participate, so he or she has more than enough knowledge to properly guide you.

Your mentor will help you become better assimilated, help you understand and navigate your Agency's culture, and guide you to the best resources available for additional learning.

### **Beyond learning, what is the role of a protégé?**

It is your career. That is why it is up to you to drive the relationship. In addition to establishing a mentoring plan, you should set the agenda for each meeting and work out the logistics of time, location, etc. Also, be considerate of your mentor's time.

### **What if the relationship between the mentor and protégé does not click?**

For various reasons (personality mismatches, time constraints, etc.), the mentor and protégé may not hit it off or be the best match. Most importantly, there will be no negative professional consequences if this happens!

Before giving up—and only if you're comfortable doing so—talk with each other about why things are not clicking (in some circumstances it might be pretty obvious). One thing to keep in mind: having personalities that conflict (e.g., an introvert vs. an extrovert) might actually be a benefit. If you're an introvert, you might learn from your mentor how to successfully communicate in meetings and deal with internal or external clients assertively. In short, mentors and protégés don't have to be kindred spirits to work well together. If there appears to be no solution, contact your local Mentoring Coordinator.

### **Will I be a burden if I contact my mentor too frequently? What is too frequently?**

Generally, mentoring relationships require that both participants have contact with each other more frequently at first. Once the relationship gains a solid footing, contact probably will be less frequent, but more productive. Contact via voice mail, e-mail, or real-time discussions are major parts of establishing quality footing in the relationship. If you are not sure if your contact is too frequent, just ask.

### **How far should mentoring questions probe?**

At the beginning of the relationship, you and your mentor should establish ground rules that should clarify what you should and shouldn't ask. Keep your questions to professional development and career growth. Avoid inquiries about confidential organizational issues or business unit personalities ("Is Todd as difficult to work for as he looks?"). Of course, you may ask questions that relate to lessons learned by your mentor ("How did you manage to balance your project management responsibilities while also taking on a special project?"). As with all business interaction, use your head.

### **Understand Behavioral Strengths and Developmental Areas (DiSC®)**

*Note – Some agencies use the DiSC® behavioral assessments to support their local Mentoring program. Typically DiSC® is accomplished during in-classroom training sessions; however it can be accomplished via virtual classroom. It is not a requirement to use DiSC® in USDA Mentoring. For information on DiSC® please contact the NRCS Lead Mentoring Program Manager*

***Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and you help them become what they are capable of becoming.***

— ***Wolfgang von Goethe***

As with any relationship, mentoring pairs are likely to have some differences with respect to their work styles and behaviors. These differences, when not noted, accepted, and considered, can create conflict within the mentoring relationship. For this reason, it is important to learn how to harmonize and respect the differences a mentor and protégé each bring to the relationship.

#### ***What Is The DiSC® Assessment?***

The DiSC® is an assessment tool that is used to examine the behavioral styles and behavioral preferences of individuals. The DiSC® may be used for team building, assessing leadership style, management development, communication, and performance. Mentors and protégés can use DiSC® to help build understanding and teamwork between mentor and protégé, and increase understanding of mentor and protégé behaviors, to help improve mentor-protégé communication and performance.

#### ***How Is DiSC® Used in Mentoring?***

The DiSC® is an online survey that will be used as one tool to help mentors and protégés understand and adapt to different work style preferences. The DiSC® will help mentors and protégés understand each other's strengths, motivators, developmental areas, and the management styles that are most effective. Based on the DiSC® scores, one can look at the behavioral styles of the mentoring pair as a whole, and understand where gaps exist and where strengths lie. In the end, the DiSC will be used to suggest methods of the mentor and protégé can develop as a pair and ways to maintain the relationship (by avoiding conflict, etc.).

### *How Is DiSC<sup>®</sup> Explained to Mentoring Participants?*

A trained DiSC<sup>®</sup> facilitators who have been specially trained in administering and teaching on how to use the DiSC<sup>®</sup> assessment tool will deliver the training module on the DiSC<sup>®</sup>. The purpose of incorporating a training module on the topic of the DiSC<sup>®</sup> assessment into the Mentoring Training is to provide mentors and protégés with an increased awareness of their individual behavioral strengths and areas where they may need to develop.

### *How Can Using The DiSC<sup>®</sup> Assessment Help You As A Mentoring Coordinator?*

As Mentoring Coordinator, it is important to be aware of the potential impact of behavioral styles of your mentors and protégés. The DiSC<sup>®</sup> is a tool to facilitate the mentoring relationship, work with conflict resolution, or mentor the mentor. Through understanding mentor and protégé behavioral styles, you can make suggestions for how mentoring pairs can communicate more effectively, establish goals, define realistic milestones for performance and skills enhancement, identify obstacles and problem areas, and generate Mentoring Plans to develop employees and overcome problems.

You should also encourage your mentors and protégés to consider each other's behavioral styles (as indicated by the DiSC<sup>®</sup>) when developing mentoring activities, writing the Mentoring Agreement, developing goals and the Mentoring Plan, and reflecting on differences if conflict should arise. As the Mentoring Coordinator, you may want to consider mentor and protégé behavioral styles when suggesting particular activities, assisting with conflict situations, and generally facilitating the mentoring relationships you oversee.

Additionally, mentor-protégé pairs are able to communicate more effectively when they understand the differences, strengths, and weaknesses of each work style, which is the key to a long-lasting and beneficial mentoring relationship. Therefore, you should encourage mentor-protégé pairs to discuss the behavioral style information they gain from the DiSC<sup>®</sup> Assessment, and suggest they consult the DiSC<sup>®</sup> facilitator with any questions on the assessment results and interpretation.

### REFERENCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Alred, Geof (et al). The Mentoring Pocketbook. Management Pocketbooks: 1998.

This book examines how to prepare as a mentor, how to conduct mentoring sessions, and how to maintain the relationship through the different stages of the relationship.

- Ambrose, Larry. Common Sense Mentoring. Chicago: Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc., 2008.

This is an easy-to-read guide and resource book for those embarking on or involved in a mentoring relationship in the workplace, as either a mentor or a protégé. Dr. Ambrose addresses some of the common concerns about mentoring that most mentors have, such as whether or not to give advice, the importance of empathy, and the importance of listening and the timing of conversations.

- Bell, Chip R. Managers as Mentors: Building Partnerships for Learning. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc. 2002.

A hands-on guide that takes the mystery out of effective mentoring, this book helps managers establish trust, create a safe haven for risk-taking, give feedback and support, and ensure the transfer of knowledge.

- Clutterbuck, D. Everyone needs a mentor: Fostering talent in your organization. London: CIPD Enterprises, 2004.

This book includes: up-to-date conceptual models of mentoring in the context of other forms of one-to-one development; approaches to managing the balance of formality and informality; expanded discussion of mentoring applications - for executives, for diversity purposes, for disadvantaged young people; and new insights into the behaviors of effective mentors and protégés.

- Clutterbuck, David, and Belle Rose Ragins. Mentoring and Diversity: An International Perspective. Butterworth and Heinemann, 2001.

Mentoring and Diversity illustrates the importance of mentoring as a proactive tool in diversity initiatives, and demonstrates how mentoring can be used to recruit, develop and retain a diverse and innovative workforce. This book brings together new and innovative perspectives on diversity and mentoring relationships within a variety of international settings, and provides a blend of research and practice.

## Mentoring Coordinator Guide

- Cohen, Norman H. The Manager's Pocket Guide to Effective Mentoring. Amherst: HRD Press, 1999.

This book is a practical reference to effective mentoring in a format that provides quick access to the important concepts and techniques of a unique and powerful one-to-one learning model. The Manager's Pocket Guide to Mentoring is a convenient and comprehensive reference, offering valuable, pragmatic guidance that mentors can use in assisting protégés.

- Cohen, Norman H. The Mentee's Guide to Mentoring. Amherst: HRD Press, 1999.

The Mentee's Guide to Mentoring offers practical guidance in the art of establishing and maintaining productive interpersonal communication with mentors. Each section of the guide section contains concisely written information about an important facet of the mentoring experience. Mentoring will provide protégés with a comprehensive overview of the one-to-one model of learning. In addition, a detailed subject index assists the reader in locating specific topics.

- Ensher, Ellen A, and Susan E. Murphy. Power Mentoring: How Successful Mentors and Protégés Get the Most Out of Their Relationships. J Wiley and Sons, Inc, 2005.

This book provides the fundamentals for mentors and protégés who want to create a connection or improve on the mentor/protégé relationship. It contains illustrative examples from successful mentors and protégés.

- Johnson, Brad W., and Charles R. Ridley. The Elements of Mentoring. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

This book concisely summarizes the substantial existing research on the art and science of mentoring. The Elements of Mentoring reduces a wealth of published material on the topic to the 65 most important and pithy truths for supervisors in all fields. These explore what excellent mentors do, what makes an excellent mentor, how to set up a successful mentor-protégé relationship, how to work through problems that develop between mentor and protégé, what it means to mentor with integrity, and how to end the relationship when it has run its course.

- Lacey, Kathy. Making Mentoring Happen. Australia: Allen & Unwin Pty., Limited, 2000.

Mentoring programs can help businesses reduce staff turnover, train new employees successfully, fast-track stellar workers, motivate senior staff, and improve company performance, morale, and diversity. This guide to setting up and implementing successful mentoring programs shows how to reap their benefits. Full of proven strategies and practical ideas, this book offers a straightforward explanation of what mentoring is and why it has become so important in many successful organizations. The characteristics of a good program are analyzed and explained to allow readers to

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tailor programs to specific companies. Easy-to-follow training activities, advice on building mentoring relationships, and potential problems to avoid are included.

- Murray, Margo. Beyond the Myths & Magic of Mentoring. Jossey-Bass; Revised edition, 2001.

Murray's guide gives you all the expert advice, tools, and case studies you will need to harness the power of mentoring. This edition presents examples of mentoring from recent publications and the author's client experience. It also includes international examples. It reveals how mentoring can maximize employee productivity and provides information on how to assess organizational needs and link them to the mentoring process. It includes all the information needed to evaluate the effectiveness of a mentoring program.

- Parsloe, Eric, and Monika Wray. Coaching and Mentoring: Practical Methods to Improve Learning. Kogan Page, 2000.

The authors believe traditional learning must be abandoned in favor of the more effective use of coaching and mentoring. They emphasize the "Seven Golden Rules of Simplicity" and provide practical examples of matching staff, ways to give feedback, how to ask the right questions, and other useful ideas for successful coaching and mentoring activities.

- Pegg, Mike. The Art of Mentoring. Management Books 2000 Ltd, 1998.

In this guide, the author goes beneath the surface and examines what it really takes to establish a successful mentoring relationship. The author describes techniques to encourage, foster success, and promote improved performance and job satisfaction among employees by encouraging and developing the process. The book is a great practical introduction to mentoring and offers a framework that allows all those who work with people to structure their mentoring sessions in a way that will bring positive results.

- Quinn, Robert E. Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within. San Francisco: Wiley, John & Sons, Incorporated, 1996.

Through a series of stories, Deep Change explores the process of internally driven leadership. It is not only about change management, but also discusses a new way of thinking about change and how it affects our lives. The author inspires readers to discover new ways of seeing and responding, allowing them to see themselves and their organizations in new and more productive ways.

- Ritchie, Ann, and Paul Genoni. My Mentoring Diary. Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2003.

This book provides a dedicated space to record thoughts, ideas, and actions associated with a mentoring relationship. In addition, the authors - experienced mentors and

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mentor program leaders - introduce mentoring, emphasize the importance and value of a learning journal, and provide additional resources. They also advise on setting personal objectives, making action plans, and creating a contract. On the blank pages meant for users to add their own reflections, the authors have included relevant mentoring quotes from well-known individuals. This book is a valuable addition to any type of formal mentoring program.

- Shea, Gordon F. Making the Most of Being Mentored: How to Grow from a Mentoring Relationship. Crisp Publications, 1999.

This book explores how a mentoring relationship can be beneficial to the protégé, the mentor, and the organization. It provides a number of ideas on how protégés can manage their own personal development and career growth. In addition, the author explains the skills needed to ensure successful mentoring partnerships, build and maintain the mentoring connection, and deal with issues such as power, diversity, and resistance to change, learning styles, and how to successfully end the relationship.

- Shea, Gordon F. Mentoring — A Practical Guide. Cm Publications Inc., 1992.

This guide discusses the mentoring process and tells the reader how to use it effectively. Shea explains what it means to be a mentor and examines the methods and styles of mentoring.

- Stone, Florence. The Mentoring Advantage. Dearborn Trade Publishing, 2004.

In this handbook, Stone lays out detailed considerations for anyone who is thinking about becoming a mentor, who already mentors someone, or who—like some human resources (HR) professionals—is responsible for implementing a formal mentoring program for individuals or teams.

- Zachary, Louis J. The Mentor's Guide: Facilitating Effective Learning Relationships. Jossey-Bass, Inc. San Francisco : 2000

This book provides tools and tips for mentors and protégés to build and maintain an effective mentoring relationship, such as worksheets to help mentors develop their mentoring skills.