DOD Mentoring Resource Portal

MENTORING ACTION PLAN

Information for Supervisors Portfolio

MENTORING ACTION PLAN

Purpose:

To provide a Mentoring Action Plan for Experienced and New Supervisors that will help them to establish a successful mentoring relationship.

Audience:

Experienced and New Supervisors

Context:

After receiving the Mentoring Agreements signed by Experienced Supervisors serving as Mentors and New Supervisors, the Mentoring Program Coordinator should provide the Mentoring Action Plan as a map to achieve a successful mentoring relationship. This document may be accompanied by mentoring training.

Common Terms

The following are common terms associated with the DOD Mentoring Resource Portal:

Mentor, also known as Mentor, is a trusted counselor or guide who is involved in the development and support of one who is less experienced.

New Supervisor, also known as Protégé or New Supervisor, is the more junior person being mentored.

Mentoring Program Coordinator, also known as Mentoring Program Manager, is responsible for the overall management of the mentoring program.

Information Source Disclaimer

Most of the information on this mentoring resource was obtained and adapted from Director of Administration and Management, Enterprise Mentoring, WHS – Tools of Mentor document**.** All content is provided for informational purposes only.

1.0 MENTORING ACTION PLAN

As part of your mentoring relationship, you will want to set specific goals for performance improvement, achievement, and/or learning. You should use your Individual Development Plan (IDP) to determine and document your goals. This section describes the process for developing and setting goals.

2.0 DEVELOPING GOALS

There are many ways to determine in what you should be mentored as New Supervisor.

- Clarify what you do or do not know.
- Assess any development gaps.

Here's a checklist used to evaluate the quality of a person's individual development plan. Use to evaluate your own plan or to coach others.

Robustness

- Has the IDP been generated/updated within the last 12 months?
- Is the IDP complete?
- Are the development actions substantial?
- To what extent is there connectivity between the career path, leadership assessment, development needs and planned development actions?
- Are assessment results linked with the IDP when applicable?

Variety

- Are multiple types of formal and informal learning approaches integrated into the planned activities?
- To what extent do the planned actions reflect a bias for experiences rather than coursework?
- How much creativity is reflected in the planned actions?
- Does the plan offer an opportunity to enhance strengths, as well as address deficiencies?
- Have "significant other people", coaches and/or Mentors, been identified?
- Are challenging assignments and projects represented?
- Are there opportunities for development across organizational boundaries?

Accelerated Development

- How quickly will the planned actions prepare someone for his/her potential next position?
- Have aggressive timeframes for accomplishing development actions been established?

Clarity

- Does the plan include specific development needs? (i.e., leadership, communications, financial or planning skills are very broad.) The development opportunities should identify the specific skills, knowledge and/or behaviors that are to be acquired or enhanced.
- Has a specific timeframe within which the development will be initiated and/or completed been identified?
- Are there concrete planned actions directly aligned to each identified development need?

Consistent with business needs and succession plans

- Is the individual's career plan consistent with succession plans?
- Do development needs and planned actions support current and future business objectives?
- Will planned actions prepare the individual for the future (succession) vs. too much focus on current role?

3.0 SETTING GOALS

Here are some suggestions for setting goals:

- Write specific goals for development.
- Select indicators for measuring progress.
- Uncover barriers to performance.
- Define success.

One way to test your goals is to ask whether they are **SMART**.

Are these goals:
Specific?
Try to break large, general goals into smaller, more specific ones.

Measurable?
Determine ways to track improvement, looking for appropriate but simple measures; quality, cost and time are three basic types of measures.

Attainable?
Identify if the goal is something that can even be achieved.

Realistic?
Determine if the goal is realistic in light of time, resources, priority and motivation of those who would need to be involved.

Time-bound?
Be sure the goal has a deadline to ensure that action is taken.

4.0 MENTORING ENGAGEMENTS

This section is broken in three types of engagements: career, topical, and situational. The charts in each one of the categories can help you identify key focus areas when getting started in a career, topical, or situational workflow. Keep in mind that your meeting goals and agenda will vary depending on the intent of your engagement. The following is simply a guide to help jumpstart your thinking.

Career Workflow

	Meeting Goals	Meeting Agenda
1st Meeting	• Establish the relationship and begin building trust. • Define the general direction and expectations for the relationship.	• Conduct relational interview. • Define learning need and set expectations. • Set agenda for next meeting.
2nd Meeting	• Expand the relationship and continue building trust. • Clarify the learning objectives and set preliminary goals.	• Conduct relational check-in. • Ask questions to establish initial goals. • Set agenda for next meeting.
3rd Meeting	• Expand the relationship and continue building trust. • Use Effective Dialogue worksheet to clearly discuss your mentoring question or issue.	• Conduct relational check-in Discuss learning objectives using dialogue model. • Set agenda for next meeting

1- RELATIONAL INTERVIEW – 1ST MEETING

Use the following interview exercise as a way to quickly get to know your mentoring cohorts. See how much you can find out about people in 6 minutes using the following questions.

Instructions:

- Ask your mentoring partner the following questions (pair up with someone if this engagement involves more than three people).
- Ask follow-up and clarifying questions as needed, but do not spend more than about 2 minutes on each section.
- After 6 minutes, switch roles.
- After everyone has been interviewed, spend 5-8 minutes sharing what you learned about the other person that was interesting.
- Discuss any implications for your mentoring engagement.

Questions:

- Talk briefly about your educational background and job experience.
- What is one area of expertise or experience that you feel might be helpful to me or to others? What experiences contributed to your growth in that area? In general, how do you learn best—hands-on experimentation, watching others, or reading and reflection?

- Apart from your parents, who has had a significant, positive impact on your life? When was this? How did this relationship impact you personally or professionally? Describe what opportunities you would have missed without the influence of this person.

2- SETTING EXPECTATIONS

Setting expectations is an essential step to a successful mentoring engagement. Toward the beginning of your engagement, spend a few minutes discussing each of the following areas with those in your mentoring engagement.

- **Goals** are determined by the New Supervisor and are based on learning needs. S/He looks at general competencies and learning descriptions, as well as any specific descriptions unique to the organization.
    - What do we agree are the general goals and initial focus of this engagement?

- **Boundaries** highlight the areas you would like to remain confidential, as well as what you are willing to share and be open with.
    - What things will we need to talk about? Is there anything that we should not discuss?
    - What will we assume about confidentiality?

- **Accountability** represents the areas in which we will be held responsible for success and failure, and if applicable, how information regarding the New Supervisor's on-the-job performance will be passed on to the Experienced Supervisor serving as Mentor.
    - How can we all monitor progress?
    - In what ways will we hold ourselves accountable?

- **Scheduling** helps everyone decide how long they think the relationship will last, as well as when and how frequently you will meet.
    - How often will we meet?
    - When and where?
    - How will we handle if we need to reschedule?

3- RELATIONAL CHECK-IN – 2ND MEETING

Use the following questions as a way to check in and continue learning more about your mentoring partner(s).

- What happened since the last meeting that was energizing? Why was it so? Did anything happen that sapped your energy? Explain why.
- What do these experiences illustrate about our personalities, work style, behavioral preferences—people-oriented or task-oriented, introvert or extrovert, etc.?
- Any questions we should add to our list to discuss at a future meeting?

4- QUESTIONS TO ESTABLISH INITIAL GOALS

First, write down one general area that you want to develop in or learn as a result of your mentoring relationship:

Once you have completed that step, look over the following questions and decide on one or two relevant questions to discuss from each section that relate to your above general goal area. The following questions will help you clarify the general goals of your engagement and move you toward more specific action plans.

- **Exploring Relevance to Mission, Larger Goals, and Personal Development**
  - What do you hope to achieve within the next 3-5 years?
  - How does this goal fit with those hopes or dreams?
  - How can you get paid for doing what you love?
  - How does this development area tie in to your job description, strategic initiatives, or personal development plan?
  - What are some potential benefits of developing yourself in this area?
  - Where does this development area fit into your priorities?
  - Who might your development impact (e.g., your team, department, customers, stakeholders, organization, family)?
  - What other areas of your work would be impacted if you were to improve your skills in this area?

- **Exploring Specificity and Attainability**
  - What have you done previously to develop yourself?
  - What resources, people or otherwise, do you have access to that could help you in this development area (e.g., for frequent feedback or encouragement)?
  - If you were to break this area down into skills and knowledge, what would be some of the most important aspects of what you want to learn?
  - What forces are helping you move toward this goal?
  - What forces are hindering achieving this goal?

- **Exploring Measurability and Time Issues**
  - What are your current skill and experience bases?
  - What level of skill do you need in this area (e.g., familiarity, passing a certification, recognition as an exemplary performer, ability to train others)?
  - To what degree are your goals capable of being measured?
  - What concrete activities will you be able to do as a result of achieving your goals?
  - When would you like to set the first progress check point and what should our evaluation criteria be?
  - Is the timeline in our mentoring agreement reasonable for what you want to accomplish?

Once you have discussed your chosen questions, determine how this helps clarify your general engagement goals. Keep your goals as specific and measurable as possible, and list any specific outcomes or benefits from this development. Record any action items that you will work on in the next few months of your relationship.

5- RELATIONAL CHECK-IN – 3RD MEETING

Use the following questions as a way to check in and learn more about those involved in your mentoring engagement.

- What was the most productive discussion or dialogue you had last week? Why was it so? What was the least productive? Explain why.

- What do these experiences tell you about your preferences for communication—simple, direct, room for explanation, time to reflect before speaking, logical, more personal, etc.?
- Are there any questions that you feel we should add to our list to discuss at a future meeting?

6- DIALOGUE MODEL AND DISCUSSION OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In a mentoring engagement, questioning needs to fit into the natural flow of a conversation and help construct a rich and meaningful dialogue environment. An excellent model for thinking about communication effectiveness is the four speech territories: Framing, Advocating, Illustrating, and Inquiring. Dalmar Fisher, David Rooke, and Bill Torbert first put forth these four areas in their book Personal and Organizational Transformations through Action Inquiry (2000, Varsitybooks.com).

As an activity for this meeting, briefly review and discuss the following material on effective dialogue. Keep in mind that you should use the four categories not as a rigid process, but as a general way to clarify purpose and context so that advice, assignments, choices, and decisions can be as focused and effective as possible.
Once you have reviewed this information with your mentoring partner(s), clarify any contextual issues that would help you discuss one question, issue, dilemma, or decision related to your mentoring goals.

Four Speech Territories

1. **Framing**

Refers to explicitly stating the:
- Purpose
- Dilemma
- Assumptions associated with a situation

This is important because it helps us express intent and gives purpose and reason to this part of the conversation. Framing keeps communication flowing and purposeful. Yet keep in mind, Framing needs to be explicit in order to work, meaning that we have to let others involved in the conversation know what our frame is for this particular communication. Framing statements often start off as: “Let me describe the background…” or “The other processes associated with this include….”

2. **Advocating**

Refers to explicitly asserting an:
- Opinion
- Thought
- Feeling
- Proposal for action

This is important because it provides people with a more complete understanding of where we are coming from. That is to say, Advocating employs a balancing act that tempers the amount of information we tell people with the number of questions we ask. Advocating statements often start off as: “I do not have a chance regarding…” or “I feel frustrated and out of touch with….”

3. **Illustrating**

Refers to giving an:

- Illustration
- Story
- Example that orients and motivates others more clearly

This is important because it helps others involved in the conversation understand the importance of what we are saying. If used appropriately, Illustrating underscores and draws attention to what is important in our communication. Illustrating statements often start off as: “This is like the time I…” or “For example….”

4. **Inquiring**

Refers to questioning others in a way that:

- Clarifies thoughts or opinions
- Reveals motivations
- Establishes current values or priorities
- Reveals relationships between ideas

This area is vital because it allows us to gather the ideas, thoughts, and opinions of others. Oftentimes, good Inquiring takes the form of open-ended questions that allow the responder to give an explanatory or descriptive answer, rather than a simple yes or no response. The key for asking questions rests in developing questions that call for personal reflection and avoid biased assumptions. For example, “Why are IT projects never able to finish on time and within budget?” would be better asked as, “Why did this specific project fail to meet its objectives?”

Topical Workflow

	Meeting Goals	Meeting Agenda
1st Meeting	• Get acquainted and establish the expectations for the group.	• Complete introductions and get acquainted. • Discuss group norms and logistics. • Solidify topic and end goal(s). • Set agenda for next meeting.
Future Meetings	• Goals will flex based on topic and focus of	• Agenda will flex based on topic and focus of

	engagement **When setting goals consider:** • New Supervisor needs • SMART goal setting • Content implications	engagement. **When setting agenda consider:** • Aligning activities with goals • Sharing ideas, resources, and content that support engagement goals. • Creating an interactive experience.

1. INTRODUCTIONS AND GETTING ACQUAINTED TO BUILD TRUST

There are several ways to build trust and get to know other members of the mentoring engagement.

- Start with a relational introduction to help people get to know each other. Have engagement members share something about themselves.
- Agree on confidentiality, discussing its importance and how each participant will ensure it is maintained.
- Hold yourself and the other engagement members accountable.

2. SETTING GROUP NORMS AND LOGISTICS

Be sure to establish group norms around communication and logistics, and secure agreement from all members.

Clarify the following logistics for the engagement:

- When will the group meet?
- What is the structure of the meetings?
- How will the group communicate between meetings?
- How can members best prepare for each meeting?

3. SOLIDIFYING OR SUMMARIZING TOPIC AND END GOALS

Work as a group to accomplish the following:

- Clarify the engagement purpose, goals, and topics of discussion.
- Establish mutual goals and accountabilities.

4. AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING

Look ahead to the next meeting, share an agenda if one exists, or decide on a general agenda together.

Situational Workflow

	Meeting Goals	Meeting Agenda
1st and Future Meetings	• Introduce participants to situation and one another. • Discuss situation, brainstorm ideas, and reach solution	• Clarify the situation and context. • Solicit feedback from experts. • Discuss options and choose possible solutions.

1. CLARIFYING THE SITUATION AND CONTEXT

In order to ultimately find a solution or information for this situational mentoring engagement, the New Supervisor must first clarify exactly what the problem/issue/question/ opportunity is, the context for this situation, and what they hope to achieve through this engagement. Experienced Supervisors are encouraged to ask questions to help them gain a fuller understanding of this situation.

2. SOLICITING FEEDBACK

Once the New Supervisor has laid out the framework for this situation, Experienced Supervisors can begin sharing their knowledge, ideas, and insights. This may take the form of probing questions to help the New Supervisor think of their own solutions, it may be a brainstorming session with input from all parties; it may be stories of similar situations that Experienced Supervisors have experienced, or any number of other activities.

3. DISCUSSING OPTIONS

Once the situation is set and feedback is flowing, solutions can come to light. The following lists contain ideas for potential mentoring activities/solutions you could use during your mentoring engagement. Look over this list periodically as preparation for your mentoring meetings or bring the list with you to brainstorm on the spot about possible activities to explore or synthesize knowledge.

Simple activities:
(Identifying Sources)

- Observe others and take notes
- Attend lectures
- Listen to tapes
- View and discuss a movie with leadership themes
- Read, journal and discuss observations
- Interview others and discuss observations
- Brainstorm
- Role-play

More complex activities:

(Gathering Activities/Refining Results)

- Job shadow
- Attend an event, training or workshop together
- Review case studies
- Create decision worksheets
- Complete a force field analysis
- Conduct a gap analysis
- Share a story with one another that illustrates a personal experience and issue; debrief
- Debate opposing viewpoints
- Pretend the question raised by the New Supervisor came from a third party; the New Supervisor and Experienced Supervisor collaborate on the advice they would give that person
- Practice presentations, followed by a review and discussion
- Observe a real presentation and have the New Supervisor do a self-evaluation

(Refining Results/Contextualizing Understanding)

- Create study and improvement plans
- Break down complex activities into steps
- List the unwritten rules of your organization or your unit
- Produce a personal job aid
- Request the New Supervisor evaluate a paper or presentation authored by the Experienced Supervisor
- Conduct a self-evaluation of specific performance and suggest plans for improvement
- Draft a training manual outline
- Conduct interviews and synthesize conclusions
- Create joint projects or presentations
- Mentor others
- Train others with evaluation from the Experienced Supervisor serving as Mentor
- Present a 2 - 3 year personal development plan