



# Mentorship Program Guide

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## Introduction

For several years the annual MN GIS/LIS Consortium Conference has included a mentorship program to give students and early professionals the opportunity to connect with other GIS professionals. The mentors would provide mentees with conference navigation tips, career advice, a resume review and professional stories.

In 2020, the in-person annual conference was canceled due to concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was also decided at that time to expand many of the conference professional development opportunities into year-round activities with virtual participation options. This guide outlines the expectations and procedures for the Mentorship Program under this new format, with the target audience being potential and existing mentees/mentors.

The Mentorship Program is overseen by the Professional Development Committee. Any questions, comments, suggestions or concerns can be directed to [profdev@mngislis.org](mailto:profdev@mngislis.org).

## Application Instructions

Applying to participate as a mentee or mentor is done through Survey123 using this link:  
<https://arcg.is/1HKSr0>

The survey is designed to match mentors and mentees through shared interests and experience in:

- Career sectors
- Career fields
- Areas of GIS
- Program participation goals and format

The survey is also designed for those seeking mentors at any level. While students and early career professionals are the most common mentee participants, we also encourage participants who are further into their careers and looking for mentors to help with career advancement advice.

The best way to find a good match is to be selective in your choices of interest, experience, and goals. If you feel those sections do not fully represent your reasons for participating, there is also an open text field for additional comments at the end of the survey. Here you can provide even more details about the specific type of mentor/mentee you would like to connect with.

### Question Summary

- You will be asked to provide your name, email address, phone number, and current general living or working location.
- You will be asked if you are applying to be a mentor or a mentee and what your past experience with the program has been (if any).
- The remainder of the questions will be similar to past years and are meant to gauge your level of experience/interest in different areas, the format of interaction you'd prefer, and your goals for participating in the program.
- NEW in 2020 you will be asked if you would like to have more than one mentor/mentee. Given the ongoing and virtual dominant interactions, multiple matches may be of interest to some.
- NEW in 2020 we will also be collecting demographic data. Answering demographic questions is voluntary and not required for participation, but will help the consortium better understand the community we are serving, and perhaps help identify communities that may be underserved.
- The final question of the survey is an open text field. If needed, please use this space to elaborate on your specific interests, goals, and priorities for participating in the program.

### Mentor Expectations

Mentors are expected to initiate the first meeting with the mentee. The mentor should work to understand the mentee's expectations and goals, and to suggest a frequency and format of meetings based on that understanding.

Mentors and mentees should work together on deciding the focus areas for each interaction. If either the mentor or the mentee feels the match does not suit their needs, they can discuss this together or contact [profdev@mngislis.org](mailto:profdev@mngislis.org) directly.

### Mentor Conversation Starters

1. Tell your mentee about yourself:
  - a. What drew you to study and/or work in GIS/LIS?
  - b. Is there a particular work project that you are most proud of?
  - c. Did you have another career path before your current one?
  - d. What sectors or fields have you worked in?
  - e. What skills do you use most in your job today?
  - f. What skills did you use most in your first GIS jobs?
  - g. What have you accomplished in your career and how have you achieved those accomplishments?
  - h. What are your future goals and aspirations?
  - i. What is your 5-year plan? What is your 10-year plan?
2. Introduce your mentee to a colleague:
  - a. Introduce your mentee to at least one of your colleagues that has other GIS responsibilities.

3. Tell your mentee about conferences:
  - a. What conferences do you attend?
  - b. Why do you attend and what do you get out of conferences?
  - c. What kinds of sessions do you attend?
  - d. Ask if your mentee has any questions about conferences or other professional events.
4. Early career recommendations:
  - a. Do you have any recommendations you would like to tell your mentee about regarding resumes professional organizations, professional certifications, networking opportunities, conferences, etc.?
  - b. How can your mentee improve their resume while still in school or shortly thereafter?
5. Resource recommendations:
  - a. Do you have any recommendations for skill-building resources (e.g. online learning platforms, YouTube channels, books)?
  - b. Are there any classes, workshops, conferences or opportunities s/he could take advantage of?

## Mentee Expectations

Mentees are expected to take charge of setting meeting times after the initial meeting. While mentors and mentees should work together on deciding the focus areas for each interaction, the mentee is expected to be as forthcoming as possible about their needs, expectations and goals.

If either the mentor or the mentee feels the match does not suit their needs, they can discuss this together or contact [profdev@mngislis.org](mailto:profdev@mngislis.org) directly.

## Mentee Conversation Starters

1. Tell your mentor about yourself:
  - a. What drew you to study and/or work in GIS/LIS?
  - b. How are you currently using geospatial technologies in your schooling or job?
  - c. How do you picture yourself using geospatial technology in your future career?
  - d. Are you interested in a certain sector or field?
  - e. What do you think are your skill strengths and weaknesses?
  - f. What are your goals and aspirations?
  - g. What is your 5-year plan? What is your 10-year plan?
2. Ask for advice:
  - a. If your mentor could recommend one thing to prepare for, what would it be and why?
  - b. What technical skills would your mentor recommend developing?
  - c. What soft skills would your mentor recommend developing?
3. Find out about your mentor's career path:
  - a. Where did your mentor start their career path?
  - b. Is this where your mentor thought they would end up in their career? Why/why not?
  - c. Looking back, would you have done anything differently?
4. Find out about your mentor's current work:
  - a. What are the three most important things your mentor does?
  - b. What is the biggest professional challenge your mentor has faced in their current position? How did they address it?

- c. What is most rewarding about your mentor's current work?

## Mentorship Formats

The preferred format (types of activities) of the mentorship by the mentee and mentor are taken into consideration in the matching process. However, preferences may not be identical despite best efforts to achieve this. It is important for the mentor and mentee to establish mutually agreed-upon mentorship activities that both parties are comfortable with.

Mentorship formats and meeting options may include but are not limited to virtual one-on-ones, in-person one-on-ones, virtual group gatherings, in-person group gatherings, email communication, informational interview, workplace tour, job shadow, resume review discussion (live), or written resume review feedback. In-person meeting places could include coffee shops, workplace spaces, or other public places of common interest to the mentee and mentor. It is recommended that any in-person meetings follow appropriate social distancing recommendations that may currently be in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Should you need assistance in facilitating a meet-up, virtually or in-person, please reach out to the Professional Development Committee at [profdev@mngislls.org](mailto:profdev@mngislls.org).

## Length of Mentorship

The mentorship program is an ongoing program in which mentors and mentees may have multiple mentees and/or mentors at any given time, if desired. The time length of mentorship is completely decided upon by the mentee and mentor, which may vary based on the desired mentorship format, as well as the needs, expectations, goals, and availability of the mentee and mentor. If ever a mentorship seems to have reached its end and the mentee or mentor would like a new match, s/he may contact the Professional Development Committee to communicate this.

At 6 months, if the Professional Development Committee has not heard otherwise from the mentee or mentor, mentorships will be considered complete. Mentees will not be assigned a new mentor unless requested via an email to the Professional Development Committee or by filling out a new mentee form. Mentors may be contacted by the Professional Development Committee regarding new mentee matches on an as needed basis. In general, mentors are advised to fill out a new mentor form every 12 months to re-express interest in participating as a mentor and to update their information to improve the matching process.