Professional Development Mentoring Program: Mentor and Mentee Guide

Overview
Thank you for participating in the NSPA Professional Development Mentoring Program. Mentoring is a leadership opportunity for both the mentor and mentee. The following guide will help prepare both the mentor and mentee in order to ensure a successful relationship and collaboration.

Mentors and mentees are matched based on the information provided on the mentor/mentee survey and the NSPA organizational profile. We strive to accommodate as many preferences as possible to create a mentoring environment that has potential for growth and success.

This guide will cover the following:
- Expectations and time commitment for this program
- The role of mentors and mentees
- How to prepare and get started before your first call
- Topics to cover during your mentoring calls
- Recommendations to have a successful mentoring relationship

Expectations and Commitment
Every mentoring relationship will be different depending on the unique goals and interests of the mentee and mentor. Expectations for this relationship include:
- Willingness of both parties to connect at minimum once per month and being available as needed. Mentors and mentees agree to honor the date and time of meeting schedules and to provide, if possible, at least 24 hours’ notice if there is a need to reschedule.
- Commitment to being accessible and engaged for the duration of the mentoring relationship. We work on the honor system and both parties are expected to meet the minimum requirements.
- Mentoring relationships will continue for at least one year. Following the one-year anniversary, mentoring pairs will have a choice to renew their mentoring relationship, sign up for a new match, or discontinue their participation in the program.
- Parties are encouraged to use online video meeting applications (e.g., Zoom, Google Hangout, etc.) that allow them to “see” each other to enhance relationship-building. We also encourage mentors/mentees to meet in person or coordinate a virtual meeting during the annual NSPA Conference.
- A commitment to keep the conversation confidential unless they agree to share aspects of the conversation with others.
Roles and Responsibilities

The Mentee Role
The mentee is responsible for structuring his or her learning and development. It is up to the mentee to drive the agenda of each mentoring conversation. The mentee will email the mentor at least 24 hours in advance of each call to specify what they would like to discuss during the conversation and how the mentor can support the agenda. The mentees will begin each call by restating their goals or questions and provide initial context. At that point, the mentee should be open to hearing about the mentor’s advice, personal experience, and feedback. Mentees should ask probing questions to understand the mentor’s thinking and why they made certain decisions in their career. Although the mentee has the benefit of a mentor’s guidance, it is ultimately up to the mentee to make decisions and determine the course of action for themselves. At the end of each discussion, relay to the mentor the highlights and learnings from the discussion and your resulting course of action.

The Mentor Role
The mentor provides insight, advice, and support to the mentee. Mentors typically take time to get to know the mentee and then use their own personal experience to help guide the mentees with challenges or advancement in their career. Mentors will review the mentee email on goals/discussion ahead of the call and think about follow-up questions for the mentee to gain additional perspective. Mentors are encouraged to ask probing questions to help the mentee think through the topic and understand the issue or problem. Mentors may offer to share any personal insights or relevant professional experience. Mentors should encourage their mentee to find their own answers and make their own decisions. Mentors are encouraged to provide additional resources to mentees including books, articles, and videos that might enhance their learning. At the end of the dialogue, encourage the mentee to share 1-2 key takeaways from the discussion and their next action steps.

Getting Started
Once NSPA has matched a mentor with a mentee, an email will be sent to both parties sharing their contact information. Here are the next steps prior to the first call.

Getting Started: Mentors
- Read the NSPA Mentor and Mentee Guide
- Listen to the 20-minute recording of the [NSPA Mentoring Program Overview](#) narrated by Tiffany Anderson.
- Read the article [Great Mentors Focus on the Whole Person, Not Just their Career](#), Harvard Business Review, August 2019
- Think about the mentors that influenced your career. What aspects were present that made the relationship valuable? What qualities did they have or exhibit that encouraged you? What aspects about them made them a good mentor to you? From those past relationships what would you like to be mindful of as a mentor?
- Identify key life transitions and career decisions that might be interesting or relevant to share with this mentee.

Getting Started: Mentees
- Read the NSPA Mentor and Mentee Guide
- Initiate the outreach with your mentor and email possible dates/times available to connect within 1-2 week timeframe. If your mentor does not contact you within two weeks of the introductory email, check your spam folder and reach out to them to see if
they are still interested in participating. If you are unable to connect after three attempts, please email programs@scholarshipproviders.org to be connected with a new mentor.

- Review the following resources:
  - What Mentors Wish Their Mentees Knew
  - How to Build a Great Relationship with a Mentor
  - What to Ask Your Mentor
- Develop a list of questions, topics, issues or challenges you would like to address and gain feedback with your mentor during the course of the year.

Mentor/ Mentee Calls
The mentor and mentee should meet at least monthly for one year. The first call should focus on introductions and goals of the relationship. Other meeting agendas will be governed by the mentee and topics/questions they have for the mentor. The following section provides possible discussion topics for the mentor/mentee.

The First Call
Here is a suggested list of topics to cover during the first call between the mentor and mentee:
- Introductions and share career background
- Share 1-2 personal life events that made an impact on who you are
- Share motivations for being a mentor or mentee
- Identify 1-2 goals or outcomes for the mentor/mentee relationship in the next year
- Set meeting cadence and identify dates/times for monthly meetings. It often works to set a regular time each month to meet.
- Identify best communication mediums to connect in between mentor/mentee calls (e.g., email, calls or text).

Topics for consideration
The following are potential discussion topics.
- **Network building**: discuss ways to expand professional and personal networks in the industry and within NSPA.
- **Building a professional reputation**: discuss ways to raise the mentee’s profile in their organization and industry.
- **Career advancement**: discuss career advancement aspirations within the mentee’s organization or the industry.
- **Navigating office dynamics and politics**: discuss best practices and strategies for navigating internal dynamics for optimal outcomes.
- **Maximize strengths**: discuss the strengths of the mentee and how they can further maximize their potential with these strengths. Consider taking a personality assessment such as the free VIA assessment and discussing the results
- **Areas of improvement**: discuss areas of improvement for the mentee and options to enhance those skills/experience.
- **Opportunities**: discuss opportunities available to the mentee and how they could take advantage of them.
- **Feedback**: discuss difficult feedback the mentee has been given in the past. How did they learn from it? Looking back at that feedback now, what is their reaction?
- **Presentations**: provide feedback to the mentee on key presentations, briefings or speaking events.
- **Board engagement**: provide feedback on board of director engagement or joining a non-profit or professional association board.
**Mid-Year Reflection/Reposition**

Halfway through the year, the mentee/mentor are encouraged to reflect on their relationship and progress made during the program. The following questions can be asked during this time:

- How is the mentoring relationship working for each party?
- Would the parties like to change any aspects of the relationship?
- What do you appreciate about your mentor or mentee so far?

**The Final Call**

For the last call between the mentor/mentee, it is encouraged to discuss reflections and appreciation about the relationship. The following questions can be asked during the last call:

- What have you learned from our relationship/engagement in the last year?
- Has there been anything that you changed/modified in your work because of our discussions?
- If you engaged in a mentor/mentee relationship again, would you change or modify anything to improve the experience?
- What have you appreciated most about your mentor/mentee relationship?
- What benefits did each party derive from the experience?

**Keys to a Successful Mentor/ Mentee Relationship**

The best mentor/mentee relationships work when both parties are equally committed. The following are key tips and strategies for both parties to ensure the engagement is valuable.

**For Mentors**

- Be an active listener. Repeat back to the mentee what you heard about the problem, situation, or question being asked. Ask follow-up probing questions such as “tell me more about…”, “How did you come to that conclusion?”, “What other factors contributed to…”
- Offer feedback. Mentors providing constructive feedback is an essential role. In giving feedback, first describe the behavior or action of the mentee. Next, offer the consequence, outcome, or result of that action/behavior. Then, pause and let the mentee react. Provide personal examples as appropriate.
- Encourage the mentee to make decisions. Although mentors provide advice and counsel, it is important to encourage the mentee to make their own decisions. Consider providing more than one option or solution to a question or problem being posed. At the end of the conversation, ask the mentee, “What direction or decision would you like to make as a result of our conversation?”, “Is there any other information or people you want to discuss this with before making your decision?”

**For Mentees**

- Use your time with your mentor wisely. Have a specific question or topic to focus on. Mentees should drive the discussion.
- Ask your mentors the tough questions. Sometimes it is difficult to ask for advice from a mentor because the mentee does not want to appear inadequate or stumped, but problem-solving is one of the best ways to use a mentor.
- Be open to feedback. Assume your mentor has the best intentions and be willing to listen and always respond with a thank you. Feedback is a gift!
- Show gratitude. Your mentors are sharing their time, knowledge, and resources to help mentees advance in their careers and the industry. Consider writing a card or note of appreciation during and after your engagement with your mentor.