MENTORING PROGRAM HANDBOOK
FOR MENTEES AND MENTORS
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INTRODUCTION

The Planning Institute of Australia’s Mentoring Program is organised by the Young Planners Committee in each state or territory, with the full support of the State/Territory Divisional Committee and runs each year from July to the following June (12 months). The Young Planners Mentoring Program was developed as a result of the PIA National Inquiry into Planning Education and Employment (2004). Since this time, both young and experienced professionals have contributed countless hours to shape, uphold and implement local programs; PIA acknowledges that much of this work has informed this document. The Inquiry identified a significant loss of young planners from the profession due to work pressure, lack of appropriate supervision and unmet expectations of work. The Young Planners Mentoring Program aims to retain and support young planners in the formative years of their career as well as providing a forum for experienced Planners to give back to the profession. The Program is enabled and continued by active members – you! – of the Institute, without whom its ongoing success would not be possible.

The aim of these guidelines is to provide a framework for the basis on which mentors and mentees participate in the program. Each mentor and mentee pair will communicate, interact and achieve their mentoring program goals differently – in the way that best suits their pair. The program is intended to facilitate, not restrict, the participation of mentors and mentees and enable them to explore the great opportunities created when two personalities collide.

Thank you for your interest in the PIA Mentoring Program and we hope it is an enjoyable and enriching experience for mentees and mentors.

PROGRAM PURPOSE

The program should provide a forum for experienced practicing planners, and recent planning graduates and students nearing graduation to develop an on-going relationship by meeting regularly and discussing matters relating to planning within an organised and supportive framework.

The program’s purpose is not to help people find work through their partnership. It is noted that using the program for job seeking or recruitment purposes is a breach of the program’s code of conduct.
WHAT IS MENTORING?

Mentoring is defined as “a mutually beneficial relationship which involves a more experienced person helping a less experienced person to identify and achieve their goals”. Mentoring relationships can be developed spontaneously or via a formally facilitated program, such as the Young Planners Mentoring Program. Career mentoring can provide some of the most sought after attributes that employers look for: industry awareness and firsthand knowledge of the challenges of life in the workforce.

A mentor provides support, a sounding board, knowledge, encouragement, guidance, and constructive feedback to the mentee by developing a genuine interest in the growth of their abilities and talents.

A mentee actively seeks support and guidance in their career and professional development from an experienced planner. A mentee always has ultimate responsibility for their career and professional development.

The relationship is based upon encouragement, constructive feedback, openness, mutual trust, respect and a willingness to learn and share.

MENTORING PROGRAM CHAMPIONS

The role of the program champions is to help guide the delivery of the program, and to provide additional support to mentors and mentees participating in the program, to ensure that mentors and mentees are benefiting from the mentorship.

There will be one Mentors Champion, and one Mentees Champion (usually from the local Young Planners and Divisional Committees, unless otherwise appointed by those Committees). Mentor and mentee champions may contact mentors and mentees during the program to check how the mentorship is progressing and to provide advice or tips that may be helpful to the participants.
There are many mutual benefits of participating in a mentoring program for the mentor and mentees, including:

**MENTORS**
- Contribute to the development of the future of the planning profession;
- Improve management, leadership and communication skills;
- Expand professional networks;
- Transfer of skills and knowledge;
- Recognition of skills, knowledge and commitment the profession;
- Increase awareness of current theories and ideals taught in university;
- Reflection on current projects and office practice;
- Personal satisfaction from making a contribution to the industry; and
- Accumulate PD points.

**MENTEES**
- Develop communication skills and knowledge;
- Build professional networks and a support system;
- Increase confidence and self-esteem;
- Discuss and learn theoretical and practical issues with a planner;
- A confidential opportunity to discuss workplace/University issues;
- Receive support and guidance to achieve career goals;
- A window into contemporary Australian planning practice; and
- Accumulate PD points.

**EMPLOYER OF MENTOR/MENTEE**
- Increased productivity by both mentor and mentee;
- Improved management and technical skills;
- Discovery of latent talent;
- Re-motivation of senior staff (mentors); and
- Improved retention of skilled staff.

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF MENTORS AND MENTEES**
- Act ethically and with respect towards all other participants;
- Maintain strict confidentiality and professional boundaries;
- Commitment to attend all prearranged meetings; and
- Discuss expectations in the first meeting and review as meetings progress.

**MENTOR’S ROLE STATEMENT:**

Specific responsibilities include:
- Sign Mentoring Agreement with mentee;
- Negotiate a commitment for ongoing communication;
- Lead initial meetings with mentees;
- Assist mentee to identify individual needs and support career development;
- Attend information sessions or activities for mentors held by PIA;
- Contribute to discussion and resolution of issues raised in meetings; and
- Participate in program evaluation and review.

The mentor may achieve these in a variety of ways by:
- Challenging assumptions;
- Encouraging the exploration of new ideas and innovative thinking;
- Being open minded and non-judgemental;
- Listening to the mentees’ questions and problems;
- Assisting the mentee to identify and solve problems;
- Providing appropriate and timely advice;
- Encouraging an understanding of career options and outcomes; and
- Sharing professional experiences providing a different view of the matter under discussion.

A successful and effective mentor has:
- Respect and consideration for the mentee;
- A high level of expertise and knowledge of planning;
- A genuine interest in the mentees’ growth and development;
- A commitment to the mentoring program;
- Highly developed communication skills (particularly listening, questioning and giving constructive feedback); and
- The ability to have some influence on behalf of the mentee.
MENTEE ROLE STATEMENT:

> Sign Mentoring Agreement with mentor;
> Negotiate a commitment for ongoing communication;
> Attend information sessions or activities for mentees to be held by PIA;
> Initiate the organisation of all meetings (e.g. develop a schedule of meetings agreed by the mentor);
> Organise an (informal or formal) agenda of discussion topics for meetings;
> Contribute to discussion and resolution of issues raised in meetings; and
> Explore own strengths and development needs.

The mentee may achieve their role by:

> Discussing topics taught and debated as part of their university studies;
> Sharing their particular interests in planning;
> Reviewing their experiences as a young planner in the workforce;
> Discussing and developing their career goals;
> Be willing to share their hopes, needs and expectations; and
> Always having an open frame of mind.

A successful mentee will:

> Organise all meetings with their mentor;
> Commit to the mentoring program;
> Take responsibility for their own personal and professional development and opportunities;
> Seek constructive feedback; and
> Accept new responsibilities and challenges.

CONFIDENTIALITY FOR MENTORS AND MENTEES

Topics discussed by mentors and mentees may be a personal opinion or of a sensitive or controversial nature, therefore strict confidentiality must be maintained between mentors and mentees. By signing the Mentoring Program Agreement (Appendix 1, p.23) the mentor and mentee agree to maintain confidentiality.

MATCHING MENTORS AND MENTEES

The matching of mentors and mentees is undertaken by the Mentoring Program Committee in each state. Mentors and Mentees complete an online questionnaire to assist in matching compatible participants with similar interests to maximise the benefit of the program. If you wish to be a part of the program in both a mentor and mentee capacity, please be sure to check the relevant box at the end of your questionnaire.

Existing informal mentor/mentee relationships between an experienced planner and an inexperienced planner or planning student are encouraged to be formalised through the Young Planners Mentoring Program. Official recognition of an existing informal mentorship can be beneficial to both the mentor and mentee. Formalising an existing informal mentor/mentee relationship is an important commitment and the mentor and mentee must discuss if this process is suitable and beneficial for both parties.

If either the mentor or mentee is uncomfortable with the pairing at any stage during the Program, or decides the mentorship is not successful, the Early Mentorship Closure section (p. 21) of this handbook explains the process for ending a mentorship between a mentee and mentor.
The following program is a suggested framework for mentoring pairs to follow throughout the Mentoring Program. Participants may choose to follow part of the program or may choose to create their own mentoring framework.

**STAGE 1:**
**Negotiating Expectations and Goals**
- Mentoring Program Agreement,
- ‘Before the First Meeting’ Activity

**STAGE 2:**
**Establishing the Relationship**
- Getting to know each other
- Career/work history
- Identify development needs
- Mentor to present work examples

**STAGE 3:**
**Development Needs / Knowledge Acquisition**
- Identify opportunities to acquire knowledge together e.g. attend a professional development event
- Share and discuss a common planning topic of interest

**STAGE 4:**
**Career Development**
- Career direction check-up
- Sharing each other’s CV/review mentees CV

**STAGE 5:**
**Sustaining the Relationship**
- Keep in touch!

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**STAGE 1:**
**NEGOTIATING EXPECTATIONS & GOALS**

**MEETING 1**
The first meeting is critical in establishing the foundations for the development of the mentorship but can be quite daunting for both the mentor and the mentee. The key to a successful mentorship is to ensure that both participants share the same objectives and expectations of the program. These should be discussed openly and negotiated within the partnership.

**ORGANISING THE FIRST MEETING**
The mentee is responsible for contacting the mentor to organise a time and place for the first (and subsequent meetings) that is suitable for both participants. It is strongly recommended that the first meeting is organised at the Mentoring Program Induction.

**DISCUSSION POINTS**

**TIE COMMITMENT**: It is essential that contact be maintained throughout the mentorship. It is recommended that participants meet at least 3-4 times over the 6 months. However, the level of time commitment needs to be discussed and negotiated between the mentor and the mentee. Some partnerships may wish to meet monthly during the program or may supplement this with regular emails or phone calls.

**PREFERRED STYLE OF CONTACT**: Both the mentor and mentee need to decide whether contact during the mentorship will be formal or informal. Participants should also decide whether they want to follow the suggested program framework, discuss pre-prepared topics at their meetings or would prefer ad hoc discussions.

**LOCATION**: Both participants need to agree on a preferred location(s) to meet during the mentorship. Suggested locations include the mentor or mentee’s office/university, a café or a park.

**GOALS**: Participants should discuss what they want to achieve through the Mentoring Program and how they will reach their goals.
AVOIDING POTENTIAL PITFALLS

Mentors may expect the mentee to do all of the contacting/organising to ‘drive’ the program, but mentees are often reluctant to seem too demanding. To avoid this, it is best to plan for the next contact together at the end of each meeting. If either party cancels a meeting don’t be disheartened and continue to reschedule. Mentors are often exceptionally busy people but they are committed to the program and will endeavour to find time for their mentee. If either party needs to reschedule, it is a good idea for the mentee to immediately give the mentor a list of three or four alternative times and locations to meet so the mentor can select a suitable time and location or suggest an alternative.

MEETING 2

This meeting should focus on the mentor and the mentee getting to know each other. Learning each other’s interests and opinions beyond planning helps build trust and understanding in the mentorship. Topics for discussion may include “Where in the world do you most want to travel to and why?”, “How would you spend your last day on earth?”, “Who is your hero?”, “What personal/professional qualities do you most admire/detest?”, “What are your favourite hobbies?”, “Are you a morning or a night person?”, “What is your dream job?”, “Have you completed personality or learning type tests before? What were your results?” etc.

Many people find it easier to start with a more informal discussion, such as the topics suggested above, to build rapport and provide a gentle introduction to the discussion of more serious ‘planning’ and career development topics. Mentors and mentees may find that many of these discussion topics may eventually lead back to ‘planning’ topics. Mentors should also feel comfortable asking their mentors for advice on current planning topics, assignments, job searching, workplace issues or career development. Mentees may even find it useful at this stage to ask their mentor for assistance with a University assignment or an award entry (such as the PIA Awards for Planning Excellence) or scholarship application.

MEETING 3

It is recommended that at the third meeting mentors share some of their own career/work history. Initially, mentors may share their general career history, significant experiences and how they got to where they are now. However, mentors should discuss in depth a couple of anecdotes from their own experience. For example:

> I wish I had known at the time ….
> The project I am most proud of is ….
> I am so glad I did/didn’t ….
> A significant obstacle I overcame was ….
> I was most proud to be a planner when ….
> My biggest learning curve was ….
> My greatest professional success or achievement is ….
> When I graduated, I didn’t realise ….
> Today’s graduates should know ….
Mentees can share similar information, based on their university studies, work experience (including non planning careers) and any important life experiences. Both mentors and mentees should reflect on what is important to them and what drives them both personally and professionally.

Following on from this discussion, mentees (with assistance from their mentor) should try to determine their personal strengths and ‘development needs’. Development needs are professional skills or areas of knowledge that mentees want to improve or learn more about to develop as a professional in the planning industry. At this point, the mentee should select three development needs that their mentor can help them work on over the coming months. Mentors and mentees should brainstorm ideas and opportunities for possible ways of assisting the mentee in developing their skills and knowledge based on their needs.

**POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENT NEEDS**

Possible development needs that the mentee may want to work on include:

> Writing job applications and interview skills
> Professional report writing (compared to academic writing);
> Presentation and public speaking skills;
> Design skills;
> Communication skills;
> Networking skills;
> Specific job-related skills such as writing a DA report, reading a Development Plan, interpreting scaled plans and drawings;
> Knowledge of specific current planning issues (e.g. 30 Year Plan) and concepts (e.g. New Urbanism, Water Sensitive Urban Design);
> Practical application of planning related legislation;
> Workplace scenarios and politics;
> Planning in an international context;
> Development economics;
> Policy development skills.

**AVOIDING POTENTIAL PITFALLS**

Mentors need to be wary of unknowingly dominating conversation, exerting undue influence or quickly discounting alternative opinions. Their role is to support and facilitate the mentee to take responsibility for their own problem solving and arrive at opinions independently. Mentors should help mentees work through all issues or alternatives to a topic and help mentees see the ‘big picture’, rather than offering ‘the’ solution. Playing the ‘devil’s advocate’ is often a good way to help mentees challenge their opinions and assumptions but mentors should be careful to help mentees explore their ideas in a greater depth before presenting an alternative argument or view point.

**STAGE 3:
DEVELOPMENT NEEDS / KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION**

At this stage of the mentoring relationship, mentors and mentees should focus on the development needs identified in Stage 2. This may include activities such as mentors providing advice on their mentee’s curriculum vitae or a job application, mentors using a ‘real’ project to explain how a Development Plan works: how to read scaled plans and drawings, advice on how to present to a Development Assessment Panel, etc. It may be appropriate for mentees to take along examples of their work so that mentors can assist with particular development needs, such as report writing.

Mentors and mentees should not feel that discussions must be limited to the mentee’s development need. Specific issues and interesting discussion points naturally arise and should be explored as needed. These may include current work projects or university assignments, current planning topics in the media, specific workplace issues, job searching advice, etc. Mentors and mentees may also wish to discuss all development needs concurrently, rather than focusing on one each meeting.
STAGE 4: CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Towards the end of the twelve-month period, mentors should focus on the career direction of the mentee. Mentees may want assistance from their mentor to clarify their preferred career direction or to develop a career plan. It is important to evaluate an appropriate career direction based on the mentee’s likes/dislikes, strengths and developments needs as well as skills, values and interests. Partnerships may consider career placement opportunities/work experience, specific project experience, further study options, expanding networks or other avenues of establishing/developing a career.

STAGE 5: SUSTAINING THE RELATIONSHIP (SUGGESTED FOR AFTER YOUR FOURTH MEETING)

As the mentorship develops it is important to reflect and consider successful aspects and identify areas for improvement. Self-assessment of the participation of the mentor and mentee is important to measure the development and success of the mentorship, as well as the personal and professional development of both Mentor and Mentee. Mentors and mentees can consider the following questions when evaluating their participation and the development of the mentorship.

> Has the mentee/mentor attended all meetings and Mentoring Program events?
> Does the mentee/mentor have a positive approach to each meeting?
> How does the mentee/mentor respond to new ideas and suggestions?
> Has the mentee developed realistic career aspirations?
> Has the mentee/mentor completed agreed tasks?
> Is the mentee/mentor been punctual and organised?
> Has the mentee improved professionally?
> Has the mentee expanded their professional network?
> Has the mentee/mentor actively developed a level of trust with the mentor/ mentee?
> Has confidentiality been maintained?
> Has progress been made towards the mentee's goals?
> Has the mentee/mentor cancelled meetings?
> Is the mentee/mentor been attentive during the meetings?
> Does the mentee/mentor ensure there are no interruptions during the meetings?, ie phone calls, people in office, etc.
> Is the mentee/mentor comfortable with the mentorship?
EARLY MENTOR CLOSURE

There may be situations where the mentor/mentee relationship ends prematurely. The reasons for this can vary and the relationship can be ended with a “no fault” closure. The ‘no fault closure’ can be initiated by either party and the reasons for the closure are not required. The primary aim of the ‘no fault’ closure is to ensure a win-win situation for both parties and there is no blame attributed by or to either party. Both parties can initiate the closure and in some instances the program coordinators may be requested to facilitate the closure.

The process to end a relationship can be done either directly between the mentor and mentee or by requesting the program coordinators to facilitate it. If either the mentor or mentee chooses to close the relationship themselves it needs to be done with professionalism and respect. It is recommended that a final meeting be held to discuss the closure and the reasons behind it. The conversation should include the following:

> Start with the good – talk about the highlights and positives from the relationship;
> Communicate the reason(s) for ending the relationship – be honest and tell your mentor/mentee why you are ending the relationship. This may be difficult but it is important and shows respect to the other party; and
> Give your mentor/mentee honest feedback – just because your relationship hasn’t worked out doesn’t mean they won’t be successful in another relationship.

Above all the conversation should be respectful and professional so both parties can learn from the experience and reflect on what worked and what didn’t. Should this method be chosen it is important to contact the program coordinators to notify them of the closure of the relationship.

If either the mentor or mentee do not feel comfortable in closing the relationship the program coordinators are able to assist. The coordinators can act as the facilitator to professionally close the relationship. In these instances the party instigating the closure should contact the coordinators as soon and the decision has been made so the relationship can be closed quickly. The coordinators will contact the other party and notify them of the closure of the relationship.

It should be noted that not all mentee and mentor relationships work out, whether it be interests, schedule or personalities it is to be expected that some relationships will need early closure. In all cases no fault is attributed to either party and participants will be encouraged to participate in future programs.

PROGRAM EVALUATION AND REVIEW

It is important to acknowledge the end of the Mentoring Program, even if the mentor and mentee agree to continue the mentorship after the program. It is a time to formally acknowledge the value of the program, appreciate the time and contributions of the mentors and the lessons learnt by both mentors and mentees. It is important to each reflect on each other’s professional and personal development.

All program participants will be asked to complete program evaluation surveys throughout the course of the Mentoring Program and at the conclusion of the program. The Mentoring Program Organising Committee welcome any suggestions and feedback on the program at any stage from all mentors and mentees.

Contact detail for your local PIA Mentoring Program
Please complete this agreement at your first meeting and return to:

<Insert details here>.

We, 
(mentor and mentee),

voluntarily commit to the Planning Institute of Australia Young Planners Mentoring Program for the 12-month duration.

We will:
> Meet at least …………………………... (please provide agreed interval);
> Attend any mentor program sessions and activities held by PIA;
> Have a genuine interest and commitment in the Mentoring Program;
> Be objective, honest and supportive;
> Act ethically and with respect towards all participants;
> Respect and maintain strict confidentiality;
> Contribute to discussion and resolution of issues raised in meetings; and
> Participate in the Mentoring Program evaluation and review.

We acknowledge that either person has the right to discontinue mentorship for any reason, and we will follow the Mentor Program’s closure guidelines as outlined in the Mentoring Program Handbook.

Signed:

Name: ..............................................................................................................................................

Date: ..............................................................................................................................................