



# SETAC Mentoring Program Handbook

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## Introduction

The SETAC Mentoring Program is a resource to members seeking to enhance their careers. The Mentoring Program is intended to enhance professional development skills that early and mid-career professionals may have already developed based on their formal education, past experience and current position. The Mentoring Program is not intended to supplant guidance received from line supervisors or management but rather to offer a window into the larger opportunities in applied science in the field of environmental science and management, which members can share.

## Program Outline

The SETAC Mentoring Program is designed to meet the needs of members and allow them to take full responsibility for the mentorship relationship. SETAC's role is to facilitate this program; as such, the Mentoring Program is entirely voluntary both on the part of Mentors and Mentees so that any participant can withdraw at any time with no consequence. The core of the program is that Mentors and Mentees, once matched, will utilize a framework suggested in the Mentoring Handbook to generally guide the relationship to achieve mutually agreed upon goals, in a mutually agreed upon time frame. As with any SETAC program, participants must comply with all [SETAC policies](#), including the [Code of Conduct](#) and the [Code of Ethics](#).

The SETAC Mentorship Program will be periodically evaluated. The evaluation may include surveys to get feedback from participants. Feedback received from the surveys will contribute to continuous improvement of the program over time.

## Participants in the Mentorship: Mentor and Mentee

Mentorships are one-on-one relationships where a more experienced person in a given area (Mentor) provides coaching or guidance to a less experienced person (Mentee) wishing to advance or improve in a chosen area, noting that this is independent of age as sometimes a younger person may be more experienced in a certain area (e.g., use of social media for science communication). The mentorship is formed to focus on a Mentee's goals in areas of personal growth and long-term professional development.



Mentors and Mentees will find their experience to be mutually beneficial. Mentees are encouraged to select Mentors who will help them with their stated career goal(s). Mentees will gain valuable insight and advice on topics ranging from networking and interviewing, to dealing with work–life balance and managing professional relationships. Likewise, Mentors will refine their leadership and coaching skills, while giving back to the future of the scientific community and developing a deeper understanding of the issues facing the members.

The role of a Mentor will vary depending upon the goals of the Mentee and the type of support they are seeking. In general, mentoring should focus on developing individuals to help them reach their full potential and meet the changing demands of their working environment. Some Mentees have experience in one field and seek a Mentor to assist as they take on new responsibilities in a more senior role in that field. Other Mentees may need guidance and support while choosing or changing career paths or transitioning from graduate school.

Mentees are encouraged to identify Mentors who are in professional sectors relevant to their goals. For example, one might assume that someone in academia is likely to have access to colleagues within the academic sector; finding a Mentor who is in government or business/consulting could broaden the perspective of the Mentee. Similarly, a person in government might seek a Mentor in business/consulting, and another in business/consulting might benefit from a Mentor in government if these objectives are consistent with their goals.

Additional examples of roles of the Mentor in helping the Mentee achieve their stated goals include:

- Clarify development needs; provide feedback on the Mentee's strengths and opportunity areas; build Mentee confidence
- Explore Mentee identified areas of interest more deeply by examining, questioning and openly discussing all aspects of their ideas
- Explain how the different career sectors function; share critical knowledge; identify relevant resources, including networking support; clarify organizational goals and objectives; introduce Mentees to the network of SETAC sub-fields of interest
- Exchange of resources, including job postings, webinars and free workshops
- Give their advice on application files, e.g., for jobs, funding, etc.
- Offer new perspectives and encourage the Mentee to take calculated risks
- Encourage a two-way exchange of information; listen and respond to concerns; act as a sounding board for Mentee areas of concern

## Foundation for a Successful Mentorship

The most effective mentorships are based on a foundation of trust and confidence, where the Mentee feels safe to openly share their goals, objectives, and concerns. While every mentorship is unique, the following general guidelines are essential for success:

- **Have Realistic Expectations.** Both parties should understand and agree on their expectations for the mentorship. Self-awareness is important, and both the Mentor and Mentee should identify what they would like to gain from the program and what they are able to deliver. Articulate these desires to each other and determine realistic goals (for example, see Appendix 1, Step 1).
- **Share Responsibility for the Mentorship.** Both the Mentor and Mentee need to take ownership of the mentorship. Neither should assume it is the other's sole responsibility for arranging meetings. An investment of energy and time are required of both parties to create a successful mentorship.
- **Establish Concrete Goals and Develop a Mentee Success Plan.** The mentorship should be focused on learning and development with clearly stated goals. Set objectives and benchmarks at the outset and



review them frequently as they may change over time.

- **Communicate and Respect Each Other's Time.** No mentorship can succeed without clear communication. Show respect for each other's time by confirming meetings beforehand and always letting your partner know if you are running late or need to reschedule. Mentees should anticipate what they would like to discuss in advance of each meeting. Boundaries should be established at the beginning of the relationship and reevaluated periodically (e.g., emails outside of work hours may not be read, or communication beyond regularly scheduled meetings may not be encouraged).
- **Keep an Open Mind.** Both parties need to be willing to be open and exchange information. Remain open-minded and flexible as your mentorship evolves.
- **Take Ownership of your Career Development.** While Mentors may help Mentees develop the necessary tools for success, Mentees must remember that it is up to them to implement these tools. Mentees will need to put in the time and effort required to advance toward achieving their career goals. It is important to keep in mind that success will not come immediately. And while the Mentor can be a valued guide, responsibility for the Mentee's career always belongs to the Mentee.
- **Be Aware of Differences.** Be sensitive and respectful of differences based on cultural, gender, age, race, or other attributes that may influence the mentorship based on different social and educational backgrounds, and different career experiences.

## Program Components and Framework

The SETAC Mentoring Program Components and Framework includes several support structures and resources to facilitate and guide the mentorship, as follows:

- **Webpage.** A section on the SETAC website will house basic information about this program (e.g., this Handbook) and links to other relevant resources.
- **Mentor-Mentee Matching.** Mentors will mark themselves available in their SETAC profile and fill out the mentor volunteer form. Mentees can search the membership directory for a suitable mentor and contact them directly. Alternatively, mentees can fill the mentor request form and SETAC staff will assist in finding a match.
- **Mentee Goals Questionnaire.** Attachment 1 to this Handbook.
- **Mentee Success Plan.** Attachment 2 to this Handbook.

These resources are discussed in more detail in the description of the Program Framework below and the attachments are provided at the end of the Handbook.

The suggested basic steps in the Framework of the mentorship have been developed based on other successful programs. Examples and suggestions provided below are not required but have shown to provide positive results. These steps include:

- Identification of the Mentors: SETAC profile
- Drafting of Mentee Goals: Mentee Goals Questionnaire
- Starting a Mentorship: Getting to know each other
- Meetings: Primary tool for the mentorship communication and interaction
- Quarterly Milestones: Progression through the yearlong mentorship
- Feedback Survey: Provides input for continuous improvement of the Program

**Identification of the Mentors and Mentees.** SETAC members wishing to serve as Mentors will self-identify on their SETAC profile. Mentees will identify a suitable Mentor from the group of available Mentors who best fits their goals using the SETAC Membership Directory. The starting point in the identification of a suitable Mentor is a basic and clear understanding by the Mentee of what they want to achieve. The Mentee would



then, on their own, search the background and interests of self-identified Mentors based on their profile information. The Mentee would contact one or more potential Mentors to begin a dialogue. The Program further provides a few guiding questions the Mentee should be prepared to answer so that a meaningful, goal-driven experience can be mapped between the Mentor and Mentee. It is the responsibility of the mentor to indicate their availability or lack thereof at any given time.

**Drafting of Mentee Goals: Mentee Goals Questionnaire.** One of the resources SETAC has made available to Mentees is the Mentee Goals Questionnaire. The questionnaire is a succinct series of questions that will allow the Mentee to articulate and focus on their current goals for the mentorship. It is intended to be shared with the Mentor prior to the first meeting to facilitate goal-setting and a successful initial dialogue.

**Starting a Mentorship.** It is important for both the Mentor and Mentee to have patience in the development of a dialogue and rapport. As structured in the Program, the mentorship is intended to be a yearlong commitment. SETAC suggests that Mentors and Mentees spend time getting to know one another prior to committing to a mentorship (“trial phase”). This might include learning about interests, work activities and personality, and it will help establish a solid foundation for the mentorship.

Once the Mentor–Mentee pair is identified and contact information is shared, a date should be established for your first live meeting, videoconference, or phone call as soon as possible. The preferred method of communication and general availability of both parties should also be established. In addition to sharing your SETAC profiles, and a completed Mentee Goal Questionnaire, some general questions to facilitate your initial conversation might include:

- What are your interests and hobbies?
- What drew you to this field?
- What are your long-term visions and goals?
- What do you like or dislike about your current position, role or job?
- What kind of work environments do you thrive in?
- What are your expectations of the mentorship?
- Do you have any concerns regarding the program?
- What type of career fields interest you?
- How should progress be measured?

**Meetings.** Once a pair of Mentor and Mentee is established with both parties committed to the mentorship, a regular meeting schedule can be established. It is useful to establish the time and date of the next session, or a pre-established recurring meeting time, as part of the first meeting. The schedule should allow for at least twelve discussions of the Mentee’s professional development to take place during the year, but it could also be less such as once per term, depending on the individual preferences. Email and text can be used to communicate between meetings if both parties agree. Face-to-face meetings during regional, national and other SETAC meetings are also encouraged where possible.

Every mentorship is different based on individual goals and experiences. It is recommended that Mentors and Mentees jointly develop a Mentee Success Plan (Attachment 2) that focuses on achieving specific goals and objectives over the course of a year. Objectives should be reassessed when necessary and the achievement of benchmarks monitored periodically.

The focus of meetings will vary based on goals summarized in the Mentee Success Plan. Possible topics may include resume writing, interview preparation, networking, small business development, work-life balance,



and career guidance. Regular meetings are also an opportunity to ensure satisfaction of both parties and continued commitment to the mentorship.

**Quarterly Milestones.** As the mentorship matures and roles are better defined, there may be a natural progression similar to the one described in the following paragraphs in terms of Quarterly Milestones. Incorporated in the Quarterly Milestones are suggestions based on other successful mentoring programs.

#### **Quarter 1: Career Assessment and Objectives**

Set goals for the mentorship using the Mentee Goals Questionnaire, and create a Mentee Success Plan based on the goals identified. Mentees should be honest and realistic about their needs and objectives, and Mentors will need to recognize what they can deliver before committing to a particular outcome. The initial quarter is typically spent building a mentorship in which both parties get to know each other beyond their professional experiences and career goals. Depending on the Mentee's goals, this is also an important time to assess the Mentee's resume and revise if needed.

#### **Quarter 2: Networking Enrichment**

Mentees may benefit from being introduced to others within the Mentor's network to learn about different lines of work or to meet additional colleagues who offer alternative perspectives on the Mentee's objectives. Progress on a resume, or if appropriate, career targets should be revisited.

#### **Quarter 3: Career Advancement**

The Mentee Goals Questionnaire should be revisited at the beginning of the third quarter to assess if goals have changed. Revisit the Mentee Success Plan as needed. Mentors may offer assistance with various skills required of Mentees who will be applying for a job or building a career. Examples may include third-party skill assessment, personality typing, on-going resume/CV review, interview training, public speaking and work-life balance.

#### **Quarter 4: Next Steps**

The final quarter should commence with a review of the Mentee's Goals Questionnaire to determine if original or revised objectives were met and are still relevant for the Mentee's professional goals. The remainder of the quarter may be best spent with the Mentor assisting the Mentee to identify the next steps to advance toward their mentoring goals. They may wish to discuss ways the Mentee can continue to develop professionally beyond the SETAC Mentoring Program. At the end of the year, Mentors and Mentees should discuss how often they will communicate in the future, if at all.

After the 12-month mentoring period, we encourage you to stay in touch on a more informal basis through emailing, phone or occasional meetings, geographies permitting. The resources offered by SETAC will remain available to participants looking for continued professional development, business advice, and networking.

**Feedback Survey.** A survey will be distributed periodically to Mentees and Mentors for feedback that will provide continuous improvement to the program.



## Frequently Asked Questions

**Question:** If a Mentor or Mentee becomes unresponsive or shows a lack of commitment, who should I contact?

**Answer:** The mentorship should be treated in a professional way between both parties and if it is no longer possible for either party to participate, we hope that this will be communicated directly to the other party. In this case, the Mentee is free to select another suitable Mentor. If it is the Mentee who is no longer available or interested, the Mentor will indicate they are once again available for a mentorship on their SETAC profile.

**Question:** SETAC's members come from diverse scientific and personal backgrounds. How does the SETAC Mentoring Program incorporate diversity?

**Answer:** SETAC strives for both scientific and individual diversity and inclusivity in all aspects of governance and programming including our Mentoring Program. Participants will be required to follow the same Code of Ethics that govern the organization. Individual diversity includes diversity in cultures, races, religions, ethnicities, nationalities, sexual orientations, gender expressions, gender identities, marital statuses, political affiliations, visible and unseen disabilities, expertise and career level, and affiliation sectors (multi-sectoral). Mentors should embrace unique backgrounds and individual diversity, and they should be aware of implicit biases and make the best effort to understand them when working with a Mentee to achieve the Mentee's goals.

**Question:** Who do we contact for technical difficulties signing up?

**Answer:** Please contact [setac@setac.org](mailto:setac@setac.org).

**Question:** My Mentor is interested and seems like a good fit professionally, but we have trouble initiating discussion. What if our conversation doesn't flow, and we are at a loss for words or content?

**Answer:** Please refer to the Handbook for suggested questions and content. If that is not sufficient, consider whether the mentorship may not be suitable, and a new Mentor should be identified.

**Question:** What if I feel my Mentor or Mentee is making me uncomfortable?

**Answer:** SETAC is a small community, and we strive to create and maintain an inclusive and welcoming culture with pathways to resolve difficult issues. While we encourage open communication of any issues between the Mentor and Mentee, feel free to report sensitive issues under the [Whistleblower Policy](#).

**Question:** How does matching happen?

**Answer:** Selection of the Mentor by the Mentee will ultimately depend on the needs, stated goals, selection by the Mentee and agreement by the Mentor. Forward progress of the mentorship will depend on agreement of both parties that it is suitable and likely to support the Mentee in achieving their goals.

**Question:** Who can be a Mentor and how are Mentors identified?

**Answer:** Interested active SETAC members in good standing can self-identify as willing to be a Mentor. SETAC members of any career stage can be Mentors. Selection of the Mentor by the Mentee will ultimately depend on the needs, stated goals, and selection by the Mentee. Forward progress of the mentorship will depend on agreement of both parties that it is suitable and likely to support the Mentee in achieving their goals.



**Question:** Can the Mentor–Mentee relationship extend past 1 year?

**Answer:** Absolutely! If the mentorship is working for both parties, it can be as extensive as both parties agree on.

**Question:** I have never been in a formal mentoring program. What are examples of reasonable mentorship goals?

**Answer:** Reasonable goals may vary between Mentor–Mentee relationships. The Mentee Goals Questionnaire (attachment 1) can help identify reasonable goals. For example, a recent graduate might be searching for a permanent government position and the Mentor may be a federal employee. It would be a reasonable goal to help prepare the Mentee with a solid application package, practice interview skills, and discuss government interview processes.

**Question:** My circumstances have changed, and I no longer feel like I need the mentorship. Can I end the mentorship at any time?

**Answer:** Yes, the Mentoring Program is entirely voluntary both on the part of Mentors and Mentees, and as such, any participant can withdraw at any time with no consequences. We kindly ask participants to communicate this change with their Mentor or Mentee as soon as possible so that they can be available for new mentorships.





## Attachment 1: Mentee Goals Questionnaire

### STEP 1: IDENTIFY the objectives that apply to you:

- Improve my résumé, curriculum vitae, and/or interview skills
- Understand the language and culture of a different sector such as government, industry, consulting, academia, non-profit organization
- Translate my academic background into a non-academic position
- Build a network of professionals
- Identify which sector or fields best suit my skills, interests, and experience
- Refine my post-academic career goals and professional ambitions
- Learn about career opportunities in a specific industry
- Obtain a job
- Obtain an internship
- Understand how to advance at my current job
- Enhance relationships with my managers, peers, and/or fellow students
- Cultivate my public speaking, communication, and presentation skills
- Develop my leadership or management skills
- Develop my writing skills
- Expand or diversify my technical skills
- Improve work-life balance
- Determine lifelong learning objectives or an advanced degree
- Define certifications that will increase my marketability
- Reassess pathway to my desired career and future roles
- Create a long-term career plan

### STEP 2: EXPLORE

<b>My short-term aspirations:</b>	
<b>My long-term aspirations:</b>	
<b>My future role(s):</b>	
<b>1-3 things I enjoy doing (my work passions):</b>	





1-3 things I would like to work on (things I learned about myself or others):

Considering your answers, complete this table:

		Current State	Future State
<b>What to develop</b>	Knowledge and skills		
	Behaviors		
	Competencies		
<b>How to develop</b>	What can I do to help me build my skills? (Learning through experiences)		
	Who could I learn from or what exposure do I need? (Learning through relationships)		
	What education or training do I need? (Learning formally)		

**STEP 3: ALIGN: Draft your development items and then discuss with your Mentor**

Development items (What do you want to learn or develop?)	Action plan (How are you going to learn or develop? Who will help you? When will you start and finish? What might get in your way?)	Measurement (How will you know you have grown? What competency does this relate to?)

**STEP 4: DEVELOP, REFLECT and REPEAT!**

Have fun with your plan! Meet with your Mentor to support your development plan. Reflect on your progress frequently (every 1/3/6 months).



## ATTACHMENT 2: MENTEE SUCCESS PLAN

Section I – CAREER/PROFESSIONAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES			
Short-Term Goals (1–2 years)		Long-Term Goals (2–5 years)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	
MONTH-BY-MONTH ACTION PLAN			
	Meeting Date	Goal	Approach
Month 1	<i>[You may wish to create a monthly meeting schedule at the beginning of the process]</i>	<i>[Example: Identify top three short-term and long-term goals. Identify professional strengths and opportunities for growth. Use this worksheet to create a plan of action.]</i>	<i>[Example: Review completed Mentee Goals Questionnaire. We assume Mentors and Mentees have already had initial conversations about compatibility of goals and experiences and have committed to the mentorship.]</i>
Month 2			
Month 3			
Month 4			
Month 5			



	Meeting Date	Goals	Approach
Month 6		Assess progress of mentorship to date. Identify goals for the second half of the mentorship.	[Example: Review accomplishments and revisit goals. Discuss meeting schedule and timeline for the second half of the mentorship.]
Month 7			
Month 8			
Month 9			
Month 10			
Month 11			
Month 12			