

NTPS Aboriginal Employee Mentor Program

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Acronyms	Full form
AECD	Aboriginal Employment and Career Development
AEMP	Aboriginal Employee Mentor Program
NTPS	Northern Territory Public Sector

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1. Introduction

The NTPS Aboriginal Employee Mentor Program (AEMP) is designed to support the mentee's personal and professional goals by matching them with a suitable mentor for a period of up to 12 months.

The key purpose of the AEMP is to:

- Support, retain, develop and empower Aboriginal employees
- Encourage participation
- Build capabilities and develop careers in the NTPS.

A mentor provides support, knowledge, encouragement, guidance, and constructive feedback to a mentee by sharing a genuine interest in the development of the skills, knowledge and experience of the mentee.

A mentee actively seeks support and guidance in their career and professional development. Ultimately, the responsibility for an individual's career sits with that individual. As such, the mentor-mentee relationship is based upon encouragement, constructive feedback, openness, trust, respect and a willingness to learn and share.

1.1. Benefits for mentors

Becoming a mentor is a rewarding way to share your expertise, knowledge and experience, to help others to achieve success.

Mentoring can also bring other benefits, such as improved communication and leadership skills, knowledge sharing, developing new ideas, and expansion of your own network.

1.2. Benefits for mentees

Mentoring is one way that individuals can overcome uncertainty and identify ways that they can develop new skills, knowledge and perspectives. Mentors can assist mentees to build confidence, challenge beliefs that lead to self-doubt and change their mindset to improve self-confidence.

Mentoring can also help a mentee to identify beliefs that may hold them back, give them an opportunity to voice fears, and consider the impacts those fears have on their work.

By providing good advice and demonstrating trust in a mentee's abilities, it is possible to help them to get the best information and develop the right mindset to succeed.

2. Eligibility

To be eligible to participate in the AEMP, applicants must be one of the following:

Mentor – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal NTPS employees from middle management (Administrative Officer 5 or equivalent and above). Mentors will have excellent communications skills, particularly listening skills, a desire to contribute to the development, and the time to commit to at least a one hour meeting each month for the duration of the program.

Mentee – Aboriginal NTPS employees (all classifications) focused on learning and developing their skills, who are willing to commit to the learning and development process. They must be willing to accept advice and committed to taking action to further their skills and knowledge.

3. Training and development

The mentor will undertake a two day training workshop and the mentee a one day training workshop to help prepare for the AEMP mentoring journey.

Both the mentor and mentee will need to have goals for the program. These will be shared and agreed at the first meeting. These goals will articulate what each individual hopes to achieve through the mentoring program.

Throughout the program, the mentor and mentee will be asked to evaluate progress against their goals to assist in determining the value and success of the program. For this reason, it will be important that the mentor and mentee also ensure they have identified a way to measure their goals or have a vision of what success looks like when the goals have been achieved.

Each individual will be asked to complete a check-in survey at 3, 6 and 12 months, to ensure program is progressing on track.

4. Roles and responsibilities

A mentor program will be most successful if both the mentor and mentee understand what is expected of them from the start.

The broad responsibilities for both parties include a willingness to:

- Act ethically and with respect towards each other
- Maintain strict confidentiality and professional boundaries
- Commitment to at least one hour per month for the duration of the program
- Discuss and agree to set expectations during the first meeting and review these as meetings progress.

4.1. Roles and responsibilities of mentors

Specifically, mentors are required to:

- Identify their goals for the program and share these with the mentee
- Commit to communicating with the mentee for the duration of the program
- Lead initial meetings with mentee
- Assist the mentee to identify individual needs and support career development
- Contribute to discussion and resolution of issues raised in meetings
- Participate in program evaluation and review.

These may be achieved in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to:

- Challenging assumptions
- Encouraging the exploration of new ideas and innovative thinking
- 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
- Sharing professional experiences providing a different view of the matter under discussion.

4.2. Roles and responsibilities of mentees

- Identify their goals for the program and share these with the mentor
- Negotiate a commitment for ongoing communication
- Initiate the organisation of all meetings (e.g. develop a schedule of meetings agreed by the mentor)
- Contribute to discussion and resolution of issues raised in meetings
- Explore own strengths and development needs.

These may be achieved in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to:

- Sharing their experiences, challenges and concerns in an objective manner
- Taking responsibility for their own personal and professional development and opportunities
- Seeking constructive feedback
- Accepting new responsibilities and challenges
- Discussing and developing their career goals
- Be willing to share their hopes, needs and expectations
- Having an open frame of mind
- Being open to feedback, advice and alternative approaches.

5. Scope and boundaries

The focus of the mentoring should be on career and personal development. Sometimes boundaries may cross into issues outside of work that are affecting development. It is the mentee's choice to the degree of open, honest communication in relation to these matters. The relationship must remain professional. A mentor-mentee relationship is different to a friendship.

Confidentiality and privacy are critical.

Respect for different opinions and willingness to actively listen to each other is important. Understanding and respect requires an open two-way conversation.

Any records or information that is recorded must be kept in a secure place and not be shared with others without permission.

Legislative policies such as Equal Employment Opportunity, anti-discrimination, racism and bullying and harassment legislation all apply to the conduct of mentoring. Mentors and mentees must also adhere to the NTPS Code of Conduct at all times.

The mentor and mentee may also identify other ground rules to help their relationship.

6. Meetings

Mentors and mentees at least meet monthly for a one hour session. However, it will be important that both parties put aside time to prepare and plan for the meeting in advance.

It is up to the mentor and mentee to decide on the best place to meet and to schedule dates and times. It is recommended that mentors and mentees meet at a public venue.

During meetings, mentors and mentees may discuss:

- Career aspirations and pathways to get there
- Self-awareness
- Skills or knowledge gaps
- Approaches to networking
- Work/life balance
- How to learn organisational culture
- Feedback that has been received from a manager or colleague.

A good starting point for discussions may be the Capability and Leadership Framework, particularly if the mentee has identified areas of development through this Framework in advance of the meetings.

6.1. The first meeting

The first meeting will be crucial for the relationship. Think about information that may be of value to build a relationship and in learning about the values, motivators and drivers of the other person. This may include things like family situation and circumstances, personal relationships, interests, personality, skills, and cultural connections.

It will be of value to keep a confidential record of the other person's skills, interests, values, and any other information that may be of use to you in preparing for future sessions.

6.1.1. 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 parties.

The first meeting should be focused on getting to know one another. It may be of value to discuss personal interests, motivators, and drivers. This is a time to try to learn as much about the other individual as possible so that you can identify preferred communication styles, potential sensitivities or vulnerabilities, opportunities for sharing experiences, and understanding how best to deliver feedback.

The following guiding points may also be of value for the meeting:

Before the session
Ensure there is a private, quiet place to undertake the mentoring
Ensure all documentation is available to both parties (if applicable)
Create a positive environment

During the session
Gain rapport and show empathy
Use questioning techniques
Use active listening skills
Discuss scope and boundaries, ground rules and confidentiality
Apply mentor tools
Explore issues in life and work
Share established goals, identify new goals if applicable
Empathise with the current reality
Explore a range of options
Develop an action plan
Summarise and test commitment and motivation
After the session
Share agreed actions in writing
Identify a time and place for the next meeting (if this hasn't already been agreed)

6.1.2. Discussion points

During the first meeting, the mentor and mentee should discuss:

- The level of time commitment, noting that the minimum requirement is one hourly session each month. However, some partnerships may wish to supplement this with regular emails or phone calls.
- The preferred style of contact: Both the mentor and mentee need to decide whether contact during the mentorship will be formal or informal. It would also be beneficial to determine the preferred method of organising meetings and sharing information (e.g. email, phone, face to face).
- Location: Both participants need to agree on a preferred location(s) to meet during the mentorship. It is not recommended that either party meets at the other person's personal residence.
- Goals: Participants should discuss what they want to achieve through the mentor program and how they will reach their goals.
- Recording the meetings: Participants will need to decide who will keep track of the meetings and make notes.

7. Cessation of the relationship

It is recommended that the mentee and mentor agree to work together for at least 12 weeks (three months) to give it a go. Rather than quit if it doesn't feel like it is working at the start, it is advised that both parties endeavour to see this as a challenge and an opportunity to grow. However, after this time, if it is not working out, the parties may elect to terminate the agreement. At this time, both party may contact the Aboriginal Employment and Career Development (AECD) team, and the relationship will be ceased.

8. Conflict resolution process

Where a conflict arises that cannot be negotiated by the two parties, either or both parties may contact the AECD team to discuss any issues:

Email: AECD.S.NTG@nt.gov.au

Phone: 8999 4118

Where the mentor program may raise any sensitive personal issues, it is recommended that people contact the Employee Assistance Service on the following numbers:

TOLL FREE: 1800 193 123

DARWIN: (08) 8941 1752

ALICE SPRINGS: (08) 8953 4225

KATHERINE: (08) 8941 1752