

PROJECT MANAGERS AGAINST POVERTY

MENTORING FACT SHEET - I

The Initial Meeting

The Initial Meeting is arranged by the mentee and would normally be held face-to-face through Skype or FaceTime. The objectives of the Initial Meeting are to introduce each other, review experience and understand the purpose of the partnership, the expectations and desired outcomes. Here's an outline agenda that you can use if you wish:

- **Introductions.** Introduce yourselves and exchange information about your professional experience.
- **Purpose.** Understand the purpose of the partnership. What is it that the mentee is looking to gain from the partnership?
- **Frequency of meetings.** Discuss how frequently you want to meet and by what means (Skype or secure messaging through the website, or both)
- **Timeframe.** Discuss and agree how long the mentoring partnership should last (this can always be extended later if necessary but it's good to establish a timeframe to start with).
- **Are you suited?** Discuss whether you think you have the right mentor/mentee match. If you decide not to proceed please us know on by secure messaging through the website or by email at support@pmap.email.
- **The Mentoring Partnership Agreement.** It is good practice to have a voluntary mentoring partnership agreement – see Fact Sheet 2. Discuss what should go in it - the mentee should write it - and when it will be available for review.
- **Activity Log.** You should both start an Activity Log to make a record of your meetings and decisions.
- **Date of Next Meeting.**

Establishing a Productive Partnership

The first meeting of the mentor and mentee has a different feel from subsequent meetings. It is the moment when the two parties come together to begin the process of building an effective working relationship. Subsequent meetings will (hopefully) fall into a clear pattern, with relative certainty about expectations and experience.

The first meeting will inevitably be marked by more uncertainty - about issues such as the purpose, the process, the relationship.

With regard to the mentor's role and responsibilities at this stage, it may be helpful to see it in terms of monitoring and managing two main dimensions: the task needs and relationship needs. 'Task' needs refer to the discussions and decisions that relate to the actual mentoring activities that will take place in support of the mentee's development (e.g. clarifying the purpose and desired outcomes, defining the forms of support available). They answer the questions: What? Why? When? Who? Where?

'Relationship' needs refer to the way in which the mentor and mentee work together to develop an effective working partnership. They answer the question: How?

Task needs

On the 'task-related' side, there is a need to clarify and agree:

- The purposes of mentoring support - and as part of that, to consider the question: what do both parties hope to gain from the experience?
- The basic framework of the mentoring support: what activities might it involve? In what ways could the mentor support the mentee?
- Any time-related issues - how long the mentoring process will last, frequency of meetings and other activities.
- The opportunities for review: it is important to acknowledge at the outset the importance of regularly reviewing the relationship in terms of the agreed aims and objectives and to provide opportunities to consider and take account of the ways in which the relationship is developing and changing.

Relationship needs

On the 'relationship' side, there is a need to develop a trusting and comfortable working relationship with each other. For the mentor, this will involve use of interpersonal skills to put the mentee at ease and develop a sense of confidence in the relationship and the supportive nature of the mentoring process. You may have exchanged information about each other prior to your first meeting - or choose to do this at the first meeting itself. This is one time where sharing information is important - later on, the mentor will be more often in 'receive' mode.

It will be helpful to explore behaviours that will support the relationship, setting 'ground rules' for the success of the relationship, for example, in terms of confidentiality.

Outcomes

In some organisations, mentoring partnerships find it helpful to express all that has been agreed in the form of a written learning agreement, or 'contract' even. In fact, some organisations insist on this! Other organisations and individual partnerships are uncomfortable with the formality of such agreements. Whatever your choice, it is important to know the answer to two questions: what criteria will you be using to review the progress and achievement both of your partnership and your mentee. How will you establish these criteria?

Checklist of Things to Consider for the Initial Meeting

Before:

1. Mentees - you will have contacted your mentor by secure messaging through the website to introduce yourself to arrange the first meeting and agree when and how you will meet (e.g. Skype).

At the meeting mentors should focus on:

2. Building the relationship: Exchange information about your backgrounds and experience. Ask about the mentee's interests and aspirations. Think about a pen picture of yourself - what will you say about yourself, to give the mentee a flavour of who you are, your experience, career path, etc.?
3. Talking through the mentee's expectations and desired outcomes – what do they hope to gain from mentoring?
4. Exploring the kinds of support your mentee is looking for - e.g. using the mentor as sounding board; someone to help them think through issues, resolve problems; a person who will enable them to clarify their skills/strengths or consider and decide on options, etc.
5. Clarifying and agree the boundaries - establish your confidentiality ground rule; discuss what mentoring is and isn't (e.g. in relation to Counseling); agree accessibility (email, phone etc.). It should also be mutually understood that there is no blame attached if one party does not think the relationship should go forward.
6. Discuss the kind of time frame for support (6-12 months, longer?)
7. Explore and agree the 'logistics' - how often you will meet, for (roughly) how long, and by what method (e.g. email, Skype). It may be appropriate to mention that meetings often happen more frequently to begin with.
8. If appropriate, talk about the idea of the mentee keeping some form of learning log or journal.
9. Decide if want to go ahead with the relationship. The mentor is responsible telling the mentoring scheme administrator on support@pmap.email.

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