



# VTRANS MENTORING PROGRAM

**HANDBOOK OUTLINING ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES  
AND RESOURCES FOR MENTORS AND MENTEES**

*Employees Helping Employees*



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# OVERVIEW

## Overview

### INTRODUCTION

The mentoring relationship is an agreement between two people, sharing experiences and expertise to help with personal and professional growth. It is a joint venture – it requires both individuals to share responsibility for learning and sustaining the relationship.

The mentoring program gives new and existing employees the opportunity to seek support and guidance from “experienced and skilled” employees (mentor) who provide direction and resources to support the employee’s (mentees) job duties and expectations, organizational structure, processes, policies and procedures, and professional growth.

Mentors have a unique opportunity to serve as a “sounding board” for the mentee on issues and challenges they may not share with others within their own team or work unit. Mentors are people who are interested in and willing to help others. Mentors help employees navigate organizational culture, solve problems and advance their careers.

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***The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves.***

***~Steven Spielberg***

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The key to successful mentoring is to recognize and respect each other’s strengths and differences, clarify expectations and roles and establish a plan of action. Simply put, mentoring involves nurturing and encouraging another person in a way that allows the person to transform and grow in order to reach his/her full potential.

# BENEFITS

## Benefits

There are many benefits to providing and participating in a mentoring program.

### FOR THE ORGANIZATION

- Create and reinforce a positive organizational culture within VTrans.
- Opportunities to shape the workforce of the future in an intentional, deliberate way to meet VTrans strategic goals and objectives.
- Support for participants of the program.
- Increased morale of participating employees.
- Mentored employees value collaboration and sharing of information.
- Helps to eliminate silos.
- Sharing institutional knowledge.

### FOR THE MENTOR

- Exposure to new ideas, technologies and perspectives through their relationship with mentees.
- Personal satisfaction in assisting others.
- Expanded relationships built on mutual trust and shared learning.
- Opportunities for mentors to sharpen their communication, problem-solving and leadership skills.
- Facilitate growth by providing resources and contacts.
- An opportunity to “recharge their battery.”
- A catalyst to spark activity and fulfillment for the mid-career professional.
- The opportunity to make a positive impact in the mentee’s life.

### FOR THE MENTEE

- Personal and professional growth through encouragement, support, advice and guidance.
- A safe learning environment to expand your horizons.
- Collaboratively develop obtainable goals.

## BENEFITS

- Exposure to new ideas, technologies and perspectives through the relationship with the mentor.
- Gain knowledge and skills in the organization structure, processes, policies and procedures, culture and work environments.
- New technical, interpersonal and/or leadership skills.
- Connecting/networking with an experienced VTrans colleague.
- Receive critical feedback in key skill and knowledge areas.
- Challenged to move beyond their comfort zone.
- Improved self-confidence.
- An opportunity to “recharge their battery.”
- Opportunities to fill a missing need.
- Gains a mentor for life.

# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## Roles and Responsibilities

### MENTOR

Mentors are selected from a pool of experienced and skilled employees who volunteer (with the support of their supervisor) to be part of the program.

Mentors assume various roles in their relationships with mentees. The roles overlap and change over time. Some of the roles include:

- **Teacher/Trainer:** Provide learning opportunities and offering your experience as a guide.
- **Positive Role Model:** Role-model professional behavior and hold yourself to high standards.
- **Supporter/Encourager:** Provide encouragement to the mentee as he/she embarks on new experiences.
- **Advocate:** Speak and act on behalf of the mentee, help him/her access resources.
- **Challenger:** Encourage the mentee to maximize his/her potential, challenges and assumptions.
- **Colleague:** Be available, open, trustworthy, and sincere.

The roles you play at any given time are determined by the mentee's needs, desires and interests.

### *Characteristics of a good mentor:*

- Maintain high personal standards
- Good problem-solving skills
- Good communication skills, including active listening skills
- Patience, flexibility and empathy
- Enthusiasm
- Responsibility and commitment
- Positive attitude
- Display a commitment to learning
- Open-minded and understanding
- Respects differences

# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Encouraging
- People-oriented
- Confidential and trustworthy

## *Mentor Responsibilities:*

- Be available to meet with the mentee on a regular basis throughout the program.
- Be a source of information about VTrans vision, mission and goals.
- Able to provide insight into the organizational culture and how to function effectively within the culture.
- Work with the mentee to develop and build his/her self-confidence.
- Help develop creative and independent thinking.
- Be open and honest about your limitations and commitments to the mentee.
- Work with the mentee to develop achievable goals to support his/her learning and growth in the program.
- A willingness to share failures and personal experiences.
- Share current and relevant knowledge, expertise and skills.
- Listen deeply and ask powerful questions.
- Offer suggestions and honest constructive feedback.
- Confront negative behaviors and attitudes.
- Be committed to serve as a resource to the mentee.
- May assist with development of the mentee's Individual Development Plan (IDP).
- Encourage the mentee to explore new approaches or ideas.
- Help the mentee think through alternatives.
- Listen, encourage, assess, and help the mentee develop greater self-awareness.
- To make a positive impact in the mentee's professional development.
- Be trustworthy and maintain confidentiality.
- Lead and teach by example.
- Contact the mentee if unable to attend a scheduled meeting.
- Understanding and sharing available resources.
- Sharing institutional knowledge.

# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## MENTEE

A mentee is a participant who is a self-motivated individual seeking to continuously promote self-development. The mentee recognizes personal strengths and areas for improvement and actively seeks opportunities for personal growth. They are in charge of the relationship including: active participation in selecting their mentor, scheduling meetings, talking about things they want to talk about, and selecting learning activities that best meet their development needs.

### *Characteristics of a mentee:*

- Genuine interest in personal growth and professional development.
- Being personally responsible, accountable and committed.
- Maintains a positive attitude.
- Remains open to feedback and new ideas and/or perspectives to reach desired outcomes.
- Willing to take risks as part of the learning process.
- Willing to ask for help.
- Honestly self-evaluates and assesses their level of training, current educational qualifications in conjunction with the job responsibilities and expectations.
- Willing to explore additional training opportunities that will assist with the development / improvement of his/her overall performance.

### *Mentee Roles and Responsibilities:*

- Responsible for their own growth and development.
- Maintains a willingness to learn.
- Shows initiative in beginning and sustaining a mentoring relationship.
- Obtains supervisor's approval prior to scheduling meetings with the mentor during regular work hours.
- Develops mutually agreeable goals for the mentoring relationship that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely (SMART goals).
- Meet with the mentor on a regular basis throughout the program.
- Participate in open and honest discussions with the mentor.
- Be trustworthy and maintain confidentiality.



# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## MENTEE'S AND MENTOR SUPERVISORS

- Support the mentee / mentor's participation in the program. Supervisor support is one of the key factors in a successful mentoring experience.
- Make reasonable efforts to approve time for the mentee and mentor to meet.
- If requested, participate in the initial goal setting meeting.

## PROGRAM COORDINATOR

This program is coordinated by the program coordinator who is responsible for the day-to-day operation, and continued development of the program. The program has been designed to fit the needs of the work environment. The program coordinator's responsibilities may include:

- Reviewing of mentor / mentee applications and matching mentees with mentors.
- Providing guidance, training, resources, recognition and support to mentors and mentees.
- Addressing problems with mentor / mentee relationships.
- Managing files consisting of mentor / mentee applications, and matches.

# PARTICIPATION

## Participation

The most effective mentoring relationships are based on a foundation of trust and confidence when the mentee feels safe to openly share about his/her goals, objectives and concerns. Each mentoring relationship will be unique. The key is to create a relationship that is mutually beneficial – both the mentor and mentee learning from each other.

The Mentoring Program is offered Agency wide, with a minimum six month duration. Actual length of time may depend on the goals and objectives. Interested parties shall complete an application to participate in the program.

### MENTORING PARTNERSHIP

The Program Coordinator will work with the mentee to select a suitable partner based on learning objectives identified by the mentee. Once mentors and mentees have been matched, a Mentoring Agreement will be signed by the mentor, mentee, their supervisors, and the program coordinator.

Mentors will support and guide the mentee and establish a schedule to meet on a monthly basis. (Greater frequency may be considered with prior approval from supervisors and depending on work demands.) Mentors and mentees can also consider checking in from time to time between meetings through email and phone calls.

### INITIAL MEETING

One of the important tasks of the mentor is to assist the mentee in setting learning and professional development goals. Some of the benefits of goal-setting include providing clarity on direction, accountability, and increased motivation, self-confidence and performance. The mentee's supervisor may participate in this initial meeting to help establish some of the goals. Using SMART goals is a best practice for goal-setting. (Page 15)

### MEETINGS AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

After each meeting or learning opportunity, the mentee will complete a Mentoring Progress Log. Use this form to identify: the progress made, milestones, obstacles and concerns, overall outline of topics covered, action items, and next meeting date. The program coordinator will

# PARTICIPATION

review the contact reports, answer questions, and provide additional resources as needed or requested.

## COMPLETION AND NEXT STEPS

At the end of the mentoring partnership, the mentor and mentee will be asked to complete a final evaluation form to the program coordinator. This form will provide valuable information about the program, and the experiences each individual had. It will also document what worked and what didn't, and what areas could be improved.

Finally, upon successful completion, both mentors and mentees will receive a certificate of appreciation.

# GUIDELINES FOR A SUCCESSFUL MENTORING PARTNERSHIP

## Guidelines for a Successful Mentoring Partnership

Once the relationship is established, you will want to:

- Respect confidences and trust each other
- Respect each other's schedules, be prompt for your scheduled meetings
- Discover common ground and respect your differences
- Be good listeners
- Be available to meet or talk at least once per month

If for some reason either of you have to cancel a scheduled appointment, contact the other person and make arrangements to reschedule. Nothing undermines trust faster than broken appointments.

The key to where meetings happen is flexibility. There is no right or wrong answer here. It depends on the two individuals. What is important is honest communication. Regardless of what's decided, "face time" should be a major component of the mentoring relationship. Being physically present is essential to successful mentoring, because mentors and mentees learn so much from reading body language and non-verbals. When face-to-face meetings cannot happen, connecting through Skype or the phone will work too.

The mentor relationship is an important building block to this program. Mentors have the opportunity to make a difference in the life of the mentee and the mentee has the opportunity for enhanced career and personal development.

# GUIDELINES FOR A SUCCESSFUL MENTORING PARTNERSHIP

## B.E.S.T. MODEL

All relationships go through stages. The B.E.S.T. model demonstrates the typical lifecycle of mentor relationships: building, enhancing, sustaining, and transitioning. These stages are not always clear-cut and frequently overlap. Below are some tools and tips for making the most of the relationship in each stage:

***Building:*** The first stage of the mentoring lifecycle is building the relationship – meeting for the first time and establishing trust and clarifying roles. Once the mentee has selected a mentor, the mentee will contact the mentor to set a date for your first in-person or phone call. During your first meeting you should discuss your preferred method of communication and general availability. Other general topics for your first meeting include sharing your background and experiences with each other, the goals for the relationship and the mentee's interests and goals. You will both have anxiety and/or excitement about building this new relationship. Take the initiative to explore mutual interests and find common ground.

***Enhancing:*** Stage two involves enhancing the mentoring relationship – exploring interests in depth, setting goals and the mentor offering him/herself as a resource for the mentee. The goals that are set can be professional, personal or career-oriented – anything that the mentee has in mind.

***Sustaining:*** In the third stage of the mentoring relationship, trust has been established and conversation is more comfortable, personal and open. You may struggle a bit with keeping the commitments you agreed to at the start of the relationship. If this happens, you might re-explore the terms of the relationship by evaluating what has been accomplished, what new goals you have and how you would like to work on them together.

***Transitioning:*** Transitioning is the last phase and the best way to prepare for the conclusion of the mentoring partnership is to talk about it. Celebrate how much you have accomplished! Be sure to reach closure. This means ending the relationship on a positive note, celebrating the time you have spent together and clarifying your relationship once the mentee is no longer participant in the program. You can also plan new ways to keep in contact, if you both chose to.

# RESOURCES

## Resources

This section includes a variety of resources to support the mentoring relationship.

### COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

#### *Using Open Ended-Questions:*

Asking open-ended questions is a great way to get the conversation rolling. Open-ended questions cannot be answered with a “Yes” or “No.” Questions such as, “What is a typical day like for you?” or “What do you enjoy best/least about your current position?” are examples of open-ended questions.

#### *Active Listening:*

Active listening is a way of listening that affirms the speaker and lets him/her know you are interested and that you understand. To practice active listening, use paraphrasing to make sure you understand what has been said, “What I’m hearing is...” or “So, what I’m hearing you say is...”

According to research, nonverbal body language accounts for up to 70% of all communication. Therefore, it is important you are sending the right messages with body language. Try to keep your body open and relaxed, with arms loose and uncrossed. Other techniques include leaning in, nodding and maintaining eye contact. When the mentee is speaking, do not be concerned about your next question or response, just listen.

#### *Giving Feedback:*

When providing feedback (positive or constructive), be honest and respectful. Make observations, not evaluations. Provide examples of what you have observed when you give feedback - don’t evaluate or provide personal judgment. Be timely with feedback and try to put yourself in the shoes of the mentee to understand his/her perspective.

# RESOURCES

## CONVERSATION STARTERS

### *For the Mentor to Ask or Share:*

- Describe your “best” future self.
- What inspires you?
- What would you like to achieve?
- What are your hopes/goals for this relationship?
- What experience have you had working with a mentor?
- What is your job title?
- What would be a really good day for you?
- What are you doing when you are “in the zone?”
- What excites you about your job?
- What is a typical day like for you?
- Who do you report to?
- What types of problems/issues do you face during the day?
- What are the most satisfying and frustrating parts of your work?
- How did you get to your current position?
- What are your career interests and goals?
- Sharing your own strengths and areas of improvement.
- Sharing successes that were not easily obtained and hardships you have faced or overcome.
- Sharing things you are proud of and regrets.
- We’ve come up with a lot of ideas today...How do you want to approach and prioritize the ideas?
- How big of a problem is it? Is anyone else impacted? On a scale of 1- 10, what’s the impact of the problem on you? What if you don’t do anything about it? If you don’t do anything about it, what will that cost you? What are the benefits?

# RESOURCES

## *For the Mentee to Ask:*

- Why are you interested in mentoring?
- What is your job title?
- What is a typical day like for you?
- Who do you report to?
- What types of problems/issues do you face during the day?
- What are the most satisfying and frustrating parts of your work?
- How did you get to your current position?
- What are the future trends and developments in the field of transportation?
- How did you prepare for being in this field?
- If you could start all over again in launching your careers, what steps would you take?
- What courses or resources do you recommend for me?
- Who was your mentor?
- What did you like most/least about the different professional positions you have held over the course of your career?
- What is an “elevator pitch?” How do I create one for myself?
- How can I use my LinkedIn account effectively?
- Which challenging situations in your life have facilitated the largest personal growth?
- What books do you recommend I read?
- What are some strategies you use to help you with time management?
- What suggestions do you have for managing stress?
- What are the toughest problems you have to resolve in your work?



# CREATING S.M.A.R.T. GOALS

## Creating S.M.A.R.T. Goals

One of the important tasks of the mentor is to assist the mentee in setting goals. Some of the benefits of goal-setting include providing clarity on direction, accountability, and increased motivation, self-confidence and performance. Using SMART goals is a best practice for goal-setting.



**Specific** - A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. To set a specific goal you must answer the six "W" questions:

- Who: Who is involved?
- What: What do I want to accomplish?
- Where: Identify a location.
- When: Establish a time frame.
- Which: Identify requirements and constraints.
- Why: Specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal.

EXAMPLE: A general goal would be, "Get in shape." But a specific goal would say, "Join a health club and workout three days a week."

**Measurable** - Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each goal you set. When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates, and experience the exhilaration of achievement that spurs you on to continued effort required to reach your goal.

To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions such as.....How much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?

## CREATING S.M.A.R.T. GOALS

**Attainable** - When you identify goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true. You develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach them. You begin seeing previously overlooked opportunities to bring yourself closer to the achievement of your goals.

You can attain most any goal you set when you plan your steps wisely and establish a time frame that allows you to carry out those steps. Goals that may have seemed far away and out of reach eventually move closer and become attainable. Not because your goals shrink, but because you grow and expand to match them. When you list your goals you build your self-image. You see yourself as worthy of these goals, and develop the traits and personality that allow you to possess them.

**Realistic** - To be realistic, a goal must represent an objective toward which you are both willing and able to work. A goal can be both high and realistic; you are the only one who can decide just how high your goal should be. But be sure that every goal represents substantial progress. A high goal is frequently easier to reach than a low one because a low goal exerts low motivational force. Some of the hardest jobs you ever accomplished actually seem easy simply because they were a labor of love.

Your goal is probably realistic if you truly believe that it can be accomplished. Additional ways to know if your goal is realistic is to determine if you have accomplished anything similar in the past or ask yourself what conditions would have to exist to accomplish this goal.

**Timely** - A goal should be grounded within a time frame. With no time frame tied to it there's no sense of urgency. If you want to lose 10 lbs., when do you want to lose it by? "Someday" won't work. But if you anchor it within a timeframe, "by May 1st", then you've set your unconscious mind into motion to begin working on the goal.

T can also stand for Tangible - A goal is tangible when you can experience it with one of the senses, that is, taste, touch, smell, sight or hearing. When your goal is tangible you have a better chance of making it specific and measurable and thus attainable.

# CONTACT INFORMATION

## Contact Information

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