



CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL  
HUMAN RESOURCE COUNCIL

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## **SUPPORTING LEADERSHIP: A TOOLKIT FOR MENTORS AND MENTEEES**

Brought to you by:  
Canadian Agricultural HR Council



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## About This Toolkit

This toolkit was developed by the Canadian Agricultural HR Council (CAHRC) as part of the Supporting the Advancement of Women in Agriculture (SAWA) initiative.

It is designed to help women who want to become mentors or mentees establish a meaningful and effective mentoring relationship. It includes:

**The ground rules:** A set of guidelines that help to build trust and set the expectations for both mentors and mentees.

**A kick-off meeting agenda:** A list of topics and decision points for mentors and mentees to discuss at the first meeting.

**A goal-setting sheet:** A worksheet to help mentees set goals for the mentoring relationship.

**An action-planning sheet:** A worksheet to help mentees and mentors set ongoing activities and timelines towards accomplishing the mentorship goals.

**A check-in sheet:** A list of questions the mentor and mentee can address every few months to ensure that they both feel that the mentorship is still mutually beneficial.

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## What is Mentorship?

A mentorship is a relationship in which a more experienced person provides guidance and support to a less experienced person. The experienced person, who acts as a trusted advisor and a source of expertise, is called the **mentor**, and the less experienced person, who receives advice, training, or counselling from the mentor, is called the **mentee**.

Mentorship does not guarantee a promotion or additional compensation for the mentee, and it does not replace formal training and development. Rather, it is a development and knowledge-sharing process that strengthens the expertise, networks, and careers of both mentors and mentees.

## Benefits of Mentorship

For women in agriculture, mentorships can be a rewarding way of sharing and enhancing expertise. It's also a way of helping more women advance their careers and be represented at the leadership level.

In a 2015 survey conducted by Supporting the Advancement of Women in Agriculture (SAWA), 40 per cent of respondents indicated that they had pursued mentorship as a way to advance their career. Of those who pursued a mentorship relationship, 86 per cent felt that it had helped them move forward in their career aspirations.

Benefits for mentees	Benefits for mentors
<p>For women at the beginning of their careers or for those who seek to reach the next level, mentorship can be a powerful tool. By building a relationship with a mentor, mentees can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Accelerate personal growth and development</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Receive expert feedback on their approach and performance</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Practice their skills and discuss strategies</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy expanding networking opportunities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Feel more empowered and supported</li> </ul>	<p>While mentorship is designed to give less experienced individuals a career boost, the relationship also benefits the mentor by helping them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Enhance their existing leadership skills</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Enhance their interpersonal and communication skills</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Learn new approaches from their younger colleague</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Be a role model to the next generation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Support the development of the female talent pipeline</li> </ul>

## Choosing a Mentor or Mentee

If you would like to be part of a mentoring relationship as either a mentor or a mentee, you can ask your organization whether they can help you choose a mentoring partner. You can also take the initiative and approach a potential mentoring partner directly. Ask someone you respect and admire to mentor you, or invite someone who shows promise and commitment to be mentored.

When choosing a mentor, look for...	When choosing a mentee, look for...
<p><b>Shared values:</b> Look for someone who shares your values in terms of work-life balance, ethics, the importance of teamwork, and other beliefs that drive you professionally.</p> <p><b>Communication skills:</b> While expertise is important, this person needs to be able to share that expertise and communicate clearly and tactfully.</p> <p><b>Willingness:</b> Is this person willing and able to share their expertise with you? Do they have the time and generosity required?</p>	<p><b>Motivation.</b> Look for someone who wants to succeed and has demonstrated that they have the commitment and passion to work hard to achieve their goals.</p> <p><b>Adaptability.</b> A mentee needs to be open to learning, changing her behaviours, and trying new tactics under your guidance.</p> <p><b>Potential.</b> Mentoring is hard work, so make sure you're energized by this person's potential and excited to help them tap into it.</p>



## The Ground Rules

Every mentoring relationship is different, and there is no single formula for success. However, respect, clarity, trust, and commitment are essential elements of any mentorship. These ground rules help both participants of the mentorship get more out of the relationship and create the conditions for mutual success. Mentors and mentees can also add their own ground rules to this list.

MENTEE GROUND RULES	MENTOR GROUND RULES
<p><b>Drive the Relationship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take the lead in the mentoring relationship.</li> <li>• Ensure that you connect with your mentor regularly, whether in person or remotely.</li> <li>• Set a minimum number of hours per month to meet with your mentor, and make sure you and your mentor keep to them.</li> </ul> <p><b>Be Prepared</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare for your meetings so that you use the time efficiently.</li> <li>• Share your goals for the mentoring relationship with your mentor.</li> <li>• Prepare to discuss a plan to achieve your goals with your mentor.</li> </ul> <p><b>Build Trust</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain strict confidentiality when it comes to anything your mentor shares with you.</li> <li>• Be open to new ideas and expand your comfort zone.</li> <li>• Value the mentor's time, expertise and experience.</li> <li>• Share feedback honestly with your mentor.</li> <li>• Don't be afraid to ask for feedback.</li> <li>• Don't be afraid to bring up a topic that's on your mind, no matter how big or small.</li> <li>• Don't be afraid to respectfully challenge your mentor in conversation if you have different opinions or experiences.</li> </ul> <p><b>Additional Ground Rules</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> </ul>	<p><b>Support Growth and Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the mentee's growth and development.</li> <li>• Share resources and introduce mentees to your networks.</li> <li>• Commit to meeting with your mentee regularly, whether in person or remotely.</li> <li>• Make yourself available to the mentee for at least the minimum number of hours you committed to.</li> <li>• Prepare for meetings so that you can provide helpful insights and information.</li> </ul> <p><b>Build Trust</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain strict confidentiality when it comes to anything your mentee shares with you.</li> <li>• Share feedback honestly with your mentee.</li> <li>• Be receptive to feedback your mentee gives you.</li> <li>• Encourage the mentee to try new approaches and expand her comfort zone.</li> <li>• Listen openly and respectfully to every topic your mentee brings up during the conversation.</li> <li>• Listen openly and respectfully when your mentee challenges your opinion or input.</li> </ul> <p><b>Connect with Others</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Champion the benefits of mentorship to others in your network.</li> <li>• Reach out to other mentors so that you can learn from them and improve your mentoring.</li> </ul> <p><b>Additional Ground Rules</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> </ul>



## Kick-Off Meeting Agenda

The kick-off meeting gives the mentor and mentee an opportunity to get to know one another and start to feel comfortable with the mentoring relationship. The time can also be used to identify specific goals the mentee wishes to accomplish during the mentorship, and to set a mentoring schedule that works for both parties.

### **Get to know one another.**

Mentors and mentees can get to know one another by answering these questions about their careers and interests:

What are some highlights of your educational and professional background?

What is your current role and how long have you been with the organization?

What prompted you to choose the field you are in?

What successes have you had in your career? What led to these successes?

What are your short-term career goals? Long-term?

What decisions are easiest for you to make, and which ones are the most difficult? Why?

What are some of your interests outside of work? What are you passionate about?

What is your most important role in life?

What is one thing about you that is important for people to know?

What do you think are the greatest strengths you can bring to this relationship?

Is there anything else you'd like to share about your personal or professional background?

### **Discuss the mentee's goals.**

Have a copy of the Mentee Goal Setting Sheet available at the meeting, and use it to discuss the professional goals that the mentee wishes to achieve during the mentorship. The mentee can also choose to complete the sheet ahead of time and adjust the information based on the mentor's input.

### **Set a mentoring schedule.**

How frequently would you like to meet? (Mentors and mentees should meet at least once a month, but they can also agree to meet more frequently.)

Which communication method is preferred between meetings? Phone, email, text?

Do you prefer to meet in person, or will meetings conducted by phone or video chat fit your schedule better?



## Mentee Goal Setting Sheet

Discuss these topics with your mentor during the kick-off meeting. You can take additional time to fill in your responses after the meeting and email the completed sheet to your mentor before the next meeting.

Questions for the Mentee	Mentee Responses
Where do you hope to be in five years?	
What strengths will help you to get where you plan to go?	
What are some areas of development you would like to focus on?	
What do you hope to gain from this relationship?	
What will be some measures of success?	
What role do you expect your mentor to play?	



## Action Planning Sheet

Once the mentee has set their goals using the Mentee Goal Setting Sheet, they and their mentor can use the Action Planning Sheet to determine the actions that the mentor, the mentee, and their supporting networks can take to further those goals. Bring this Action Planning Sheet to each mentorship meeting and update it as needed.

MENTORSHIP GOAL #1:					
How will I achieve the goal?	Mentee actions	Mentor actions	Supporting network actions	Potential obstacles and solutions	Target completion date
Strategy #1					
Strategy #2					
MENTORSHIP GOAL #2:					
How will I achieve the goal?	Mentee actions	Mentor actions	Supporting network actions	Potential obstacles and solutions	Target completion date
Strategy #1					
Strategy #2					
MENTORSHIP GOAL #3:					
How will I achieve the goal?	Mentee actions	Mentor actions	Supporting network actions	Potential obstacles and solutions	Target completion date
Strategy #1					
Strategy #2					



## Check-In Sheet

The mentor and mentee should bring this check-in sheet to the mentorship meeting every few months. By using these questions to guide a conversation, they can ensure that they're working effectively together to further the mentee's career goals.

Remember that every mentorship will have a different lifespan. Some endure for many years, while others reach their natural end much sooner. This will depend on many factors, including the mentee's goals and the pace of their progress. By recognizing the point at which the mentorship begins to deliver diminishing returns, the mentor and mentee can ensure that they continue to make the best use of their professional time.

- Are we meeting with the appropriate frequency and for the right length of time?
- Do we often have to reschedule? If so, why? Is there a way to make the meeting time more convenient?
- Are we following up on our action items coming out of each meeting? If not, what can we do differently?
- What skills are we building as a result of our monthly dialogues?
- Are we achieving the identified mentoring goals from the Action Planning Sheet?
- What do you enjoy the most in the mentoring relationship? What would you like to improve?
- What have you learned from this relationship?
- What other actions can be taken to improve the relationship?
- Has the relationship reached a natural end?

## Additional Leadership Resources

These resources include programs, tools, and training that can help women in agriculture advance their leadership skills and discover new opportunities for career growth. Additional leadership resources can also be found at [cahrc-ccrha.ca/agriwomen](http://cahrc-ccrha.ca/agriwomen).

[AgriJobMatch](#): This job board provides the most comprehensive source of agriculture jobs in Canada, including internships, volunteer positions, and career opportunities at all experience levels.

[Agri-Leadership](#): This leadership self-assessment tool measures your existing leadership strengths in four competency areas and identifies areas where you may benefit from additional training or support.

[AgriJobs](#): This interactive tool helps you evaluate your skills and interests, identify potential careers that fit your profile, and see your potential pathways to leadership opportunities in agriculture.

[AgriTalent](#): This national database of learning opportunities helps you find a variety of training opportunities—including online and in-class options—to help you enhance your agricultural and leadership skills.

[Success for Women in Agri-Food](#): This program provides information, training, mentorship, networking, and workshops to women ag-entrepreneurs in rural Alberta.

[Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program](#): This 19-month executive development opportunity in Ontario helps men and women explore agri-food trends, economics, and international trade, and learn how to influence the future of the agriculture industry.

[Atlantic Agricultural Leadership Program](#): This 18-month program provides advanced training to give agricultural leaders the hard and soft skills they need to help the Atlantic and Canadian rural and agriculture sectors evolve.

[Chicken Farmers of Ontario Women in Leadership](#): This initiative encourages women to get involved in improving gender diversity in corporate governance, and includes sponsorship to attend the Women in Agriculture Conference.