



# Mentee Handbook



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## A Mentoring Program for California State Parks Employees (CSP)

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The goal of this mentoring program is to receive personalized guidance to aid you in your career objectives. Your participation in this program will impact your professional development, the important work that you do, and the greater organization. Thank you for volunteering your time and energy to this commitment.

The Mentorship Program supports California State Parks (CSP) employees to be more effective in their role. At a basic level, the mentor pairing provides support and guidance in developing best practices to meet organizational goals and can aid in promoting the following:

- Learn the workplace culture
- Enhance Skill Development
- Motivation
- Networking
- Problem solving
- Providing feedback
- Team leadership
- Thinking and acting strategically
- Knowledge Transfer
- Career development and more.

To this end, a panel of fellow CSP employees will pair mentee to mentor to create the best possible match that will help in obtaining career objectives.

This handbook describes the program's structure, implementation details, and helpful tips to create a successful mentor-mentee relationship. Your mentor also has a handbook written from the perspective of their role.



## Why Mentoring?

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By participating in the Mentorship Program, you will have the opportunity to learn more about CSP. You will build and strengthen relationships with coworkers, learn more about supervisory standards and expectations, and develop best practices that help you meet CSP organizational goals. As a mentee, there are numerous ways you can benefit from this mentorship.

### Having a Mentor

A mentor can enrich your work experience in many ways, including:

- Recognizing, and be recognized for your achievements
- Strengthening your skills
- Gathering meaningful knowledge through sharing stories
- Engaging in practices that will increase your ability to give and receive constructive feedback
- Building strong bonds with a coworker and broadening your network
- Reflecting on your career and refining your career goals
- Exposing another employee to things that interest and excite you

This program relies on engaged mentees who are willing to spend a portion of their time to enrich their career experience. Being a mentee is a great opportunity to make a difference in the organization. Mentees develop skills that help them to influence the potential of employees under their own supervision. Being a mentee does not just benefit others; it benefits you as well!



## How does it work?

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The CSP Mentorship Program design provides guidance for both the mentor and the mentee. Mentors have a corresponding handbook that sets their own goals and objectives so that the mentees engage in a process where the more experienced person can share best practices. The mentor guides the mentee to create long-term goals to achieve career objectives. Additionally, room for customization exists in a variety of subject areas, including personal growth and development.

Once a match is made, the mentoring relationship begins. Take time to discuss needs, and potential solutions, and to calendar goals, objectives, and assignments to help provide direction on which goals and objectives to address in the mentoring relationship. The relationship develops as both parties commit to agreements that are purposeful, action-oriented, and ready to produce the intended results. Learning occurs as a result of the mentor's willingness to coach the mentee to take risks and to adapt to changes in progress. This mentoring program can assist a mentee to build general learning practices based on shared experience, expertise, and exposure to prior knowledge.

### Establishing the Mentoring Relationship

At the first meeting, mentors and mentees discuss expectations for their mentoring relationships. A frank discussion about what each party expects from the relationship, including any limitations, is the single most important factor in making the relationship a success.

Mentor/mentee pairs commit to six months of working together that include at least two regularly scheduled meetings per month. If possible, meeting weekly is ideal. Meetings may be in-person, by phone or by videoconferencing. Mentor and mentee pairs have the flexibility to design their meetings in the way that best fits their needs, with the most important goal being to create a consistent mentoring practice.

Through this structure mentors will work with an assigned mentee to employ best practices to meet the agreed upon long-term goals.

The high-level process for the mentoring relationship is as follows:

1. Mentee matched with mentor
2. Share contact information, best times to reach

3. Calendar flexible agreements to meet for the term of the Mentoring Program
4. Work through a checklist of mentee items (Deliverables)
5. Develop mentee action plan
6. Meet regularly; check off items as completed; discuss progress, problem-solve, and celebrate successes
7. Hold a final meeting to reflect on what was learned and achieved during the mentorship, thank one another, and create closure
8. End Mentoring relationship

### **Possible Questions for Discussion**

Possible questions Mentors/ Mentees may discuss to create a foundation for a trusting relationship include:

- What is your educational and professional background?
- How long have you been with CSP?
- What are your greatest strengths? Greatest weaknesses?
- What are your short-term goals? Long term goals?
- What are your hobbies/interest outside of work?

Your mentor may ask you:

- Are there any topics of urgent interest?
- What topics do you want to cover in our conversations?
- What do you see as my role as your mentor?
- What ground rules should we set?
- What do you hope to gain from this relationship?
- What do you think will be challenging about this relationship?

### **Some Suggested Activities/Topics**

- Talk about the goals/progress in the mentee's action plan
- Watch a particular webinar or training resource suited to your interest/career objectives

- Discuss mentee efforts to implement action plan goals or improvements
- Network with other mentor/mentee Pairs
- Get coffee nearby to get out of the office



## Stages of the Mentoring Relationship

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As with all relationships, your mentoring relationship will grow and evolve through stages over time. It takes time to develop an effective mentorship. While each relationship will move through the stages at its own pace, having an understanding of each stage will help you know what to expect.

The mentoring relationship is different from other work-related relationships. *Work relationships* are often more about the expected deliverables of the job. However, your *mentoring relationship* is more about how to meet those deliverables, particularly around your career goals and expectations. Mentoring takes place in a less formalized, supportive environment, where interaction regarding concepts and best practices can be shared and discussed.

### Stage 1: Getting to Know Each Other

During the first stage of the mentoring relationship, mentors and mentees should work to build a foundation for the relationship and establish trust.

In your initial meeting, take some time to get to know each other. If you have already worked together, take some time to catch up and build up the relationship free from other work constraints. You might spend time talking about who you are, your background and experiences, your management and supervisory philosophy, and shared stories on the challenges of being a supervisor. Spend time sharing your expectations and ideas for the mentorship and listen to those of your mentor. This is also the time to come to agreement on how and when you will meet and communicate.

### Stage 2: Setting Goals & Planning Action

As you move into the second meeting and enter Stage 2, discuss expectations for the mentorship more deeply. Determine specific ways in which you will use the mentorship to support your career goals and deliverables. Setting clear goals provides focus for the mentorship and allows you to tailor them to your specific needs.

Once you have discussed and agreed upon the goals of your mentorship, finalize the goals in a worksheet to use as a reference. Accept guidance from your mentor while planning the action steps to achieve your goals and identifying ways these can be supported in the mentorship.



### Stage 3: Working Together & Growing the Relationship

Most of the mentorship is spent in Stage 3, in which you meet regularly to support your actions toward the achievement of the goals set in Stage 2. During this time, the relationship between the mentor and mentee deepens. This allows greater trust and openness, and more meaningful discussion. As the mentor and mentee become more comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas with each other, you will become more willing to try new approaches to achieving your goals.

Remember that you must follow through on commitments as a matter of integrity. Be sensitive to cultural and other social differences by respecting and accepting the other person's style and approach. Remember to treat your conversations with confidentiality.



## Effective Mentoring Qualities

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Each mentoring connection is unique, and therefore, each person comes to the connection with his or her own style, values and expectations. One of the most critical things to have as a mentee is a basic desire to enter into a learning relationship when establishing a mentorship. Generally, you can do this by showing genuine interest, kindness, appreciation, flexibility, and openness, setting healthy boundaries and using good business and social manners.

Generally, mentees share a certain set of qualities that lead them to learn and develop through a mentorship relationship. These qualities include:

- Being eager to learn
- Working as a team player
- Applying the new skills as you learn
- Practicing patience in completing goals and objectives
- Taking risks outside of your comfort zone
- Maintaining a positive attitude
- Being an engaged participant
- Willing to invest time on the relationship
- Willing to keep confidentiality
- Committing to working with mentor to formulate his or her own specific goals
- Respecting diversity and differences.



## Effective vs. Ineffective Mentoring Behaviors

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<i>Effective</i>	<i>Ineffective</i>
★ Constructive feedback	★ Excessive praise / criticism
★ Active listening	★ Judging & correcting
★ Two-way conversations	★ Doing all the talking or all the listening
★ Making suggestions	★ Making commands
★ Asking open-ended questions	★ Having all the answers
★ Focusing on positive outcomes	★ Trying to fix things for the mentee



## Making the Most of the Mentoring Relationship

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As stated above, mentoring relationships tend to be more satisfying for both parties when certain elements are in place and when both the mentor and the mentee take active roles. However, the success of the relationship also depends on several key elements to insure the effectiveness of the relationship. These key elements are:

### 1. Purpose

This relationship is a high priority for both of you. You consider being an engaged mentee to be an important growth step for your career development. You and your mentor are clear on why you are working together and the reasons you are meeting. You have discussed and agreed upon what you will work on, and you recognize when you've met your purpose. You feel good about the focus of your relationship and what you are doing in it. From time to time you check in to see if you should change your purpose or focus in some way. When you have accomplished the goal or goals of your relationship, you are willing to continue seeing your mentor as a future resource.

### 2. Communication

You communicate in the ways (in-person, phone, text, or email) you both prefer. You get back to your mentor in the timeframe you have agreed upon. Your mentor generally does the same. The communication between you adds up to at least 2 hours a month and is frequent enough for both of you. You are an effective listener, and you remember what your mentor tells you. You ask appropriate questions, and your mentor is responsive. You share information about yourself. You monitor your nonverbal language to be sure it is conveying what you want. You invite your mentor to give you suggestions for how you can communicate better, and you try these out in a timely manner.

### 3. Trust

The trust between you is growing. You welcome and keep in confidence the information your mentor shares with you. Your mentor knows he/she can count on you to be honest and to follow through on your promises. You avoid any trust-breaking behaviors such as canceling appointments without compelling reasons, talking negatively about others, or making excuses about why you cannot follow through on commitments. You are increasingly sharing more of yourself and are becoming less guarded than when this mentoring partnership started.

## 4. Process

Your meetings and other interactions are moving along at the right pace. You meet as required, and those sessions are usually the right length. You both like where you are meeting. You enjoy the effort you devote to following through on agreements between your mentoring sessions. You are aware of the best practices goals and are carefully moving through them. You like how you operate as a mentoring pair and check in with each other to see if you are both satisfied.

## 5. Progress

You have made it easy for your mentor to help you identify appropriate best practices goals and build competencies to reach those goals. You take the lead on identifying interesting learning experiences and report the results of these to your mentor. You have made significant progress toward your goals since starting to meet with your mentor. You are also making notable progress in your ability to be mentored.

## 6. Feedback

You told your mentor how you wanted positive and corrective feedback. When you receive positive feedback, you express your thanks and use the information to reinforce your efforts. When you receive corrective feedback, you are non-defensive and take immediate steps to apply it. You remember to give your mentor positive feedback about his/her mentoring and other things he/she has shared. If agreed upon, you give your mentor suggestions for improvement.



## Guidelines for Receiving Feedback

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Throughout the course of your mentorship, you will have an opportunity to receive a great deal of feedback from your mentor. It is important that as the driver of the relationship, you receive this feedback in a positive manner and in such a way that it encourages further development of the relationship with your mentor.

### **Follow these guidelines to make sure you receive feedback in the most effective way:**

- Try to control your defensiveness. Fear of hurting you or having to deal with defensive or justifying behavior make people hesitant to give feedback to another person.
- Listen to understand. Practice all the skills of an effective listener including using body language and facial expressions that encourage the other person to talk.
- Try to suspend judgment. After all, in learning the views of the feedback provider, you learn about yourself and how your actions are interpreted in the world.
- Summarize and reflect what you hear. Your feedback provider will appreciate that you are really hearing what they are saying. You are ascertaining that you 'are' really hearing.
- Ask questions to clarify. Focus on questions to make sure you understand the feedback.
- Ask for examples and stories that illustrate the feedback, so you know you share meaning with the person providing feedback.
- Be approachable. People avoid giving feedback if you are defensive or non-receptive. Your openness to feedback is obvious through your body language, facial expressions, and welcoming manner.
- Check with others to determine the reliability of the feedback. If only one person believes it about you, it may be just him or her, not you.
- Remember, only you have the right and the ability to decide what to do with the feedback.

### **Tips to remember about feedback:**

- Try to show your appreciation to the person providing the feedback. They will feel encouraged and, believe it or not, you do want to encourage feedback.
- If you find yourself becoming defensive or hostile, practice stress management techniques such as taking a deep breath and letting it out slowly.

- If you really disagree, are angry or upset, and want to dissuade the other person of their opinion, wait until your emotions are under control to reopen the discussion.



## Effective Goal Setting

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Use the **SMART** goal strategy to make sure your goals are well-defined and meaningful, as outlined below:

- Goals should be **specific**.  
Goals need to be clearly explained, using details about what you want to achieve.
- Goals should be **measurable**.  
You should have a way to measure progress toward the goal. One way to do this is to break large, long-term goals into meaningful segments. Each of these segments can serve as milestones toward the completion of the larger goal. If there is any way to quantify goals or segments, that can also help in determining the mentees completion of the overall goal.
- Goals must be **attainable**.  
The goals must be within your reach. You need to feel challenged, but not incapable of reaching the goals. You must consider your special talents and weigh those talents with the supervisory goals and skillsets to which you strive. You need to create the right supervisory "fit" for yourself.
- Goals should be **results-oriented**.  
You should concentrate on the results of your efforts, not so much on the activities that are required to accomplish them.
- Goals must be **relevant**.  
The goals must be appropriate to your work while moving you closer to the type of work that you find challenging and enjoyable.
- Goals must be **time framed**.  
Plan to stick to the overall time frame of six months for goals with interim deadlines to ensure that you are moving toward these goals. It's important not to make goals too future-oriented. Most goals should be within a three – six-month range.





## Additional Mentee Roles

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As a mentee, your primary role is to receive guidance and support from your mentor based on your unique developmental needs. The roles you assume as a mentee depend on your needs and on the relationship, you have established with your mentor. At different points in the relationship, you will take on some or all of the following roles:

### Active Participant

It is important that you actively engage in the mentorship in order to sustain your relationship with your mentor and demonstrate that you value the mentorship. Some tips might include:

- Initially, allow your mentor to take the lead in the connection until you get a feel for the mentor's personality and work style. Listen and respect the opportunities, limitations, and format of the connection he/she is able to provide for you. Always act with courtesy and respect toward your mentor.
- Seriously consider all advice or suggestions you receive. Arguing why the mentor's advice would not work can be construed as rude and close-minded.
- Express your appreciation for assistance your mentor gives you. Take time to provide positive feedback and appreciation when you get information or resources that really assist you in completing goals and objectives or growing your supervisory skillset.
- Participate - be eager to learn; take advantage of information and suggestions offered; think ahead and contemplate your goals and objectives; interact with your mentor to achieve desired goals.
- Listen - actively listen; be open to constructive criticism and positive feedback; respect mentor's confidence and trust.
- Be honest - communicate openly with your mentor; ask for feedback; acknowledge when your mentor's suggestions are followed and share the outcome.
- Enter into the relationship with the idea that you will be mentored regarding best practices and their potential impact.
- Set aside the necessary time to participate in the mentorship program
- Listen, think, question, and strategize with your mentor.
- Facilitate and participate in the development of a constructive relationship.

## Driver of the Relationship

Beyond being active, you should be the driving force of the mentorship. Your motivation to create opportunities for engaging with your mentor will determine the outcome of the relationship. You must not only engage but identify and plan what you want most out of the relationship.

- Initiate - be proactive; schedule meetings; actively seek out your mentor.
- Identify the supervisory skills, knowledge, and/or goals that you want to achieve and communicate them to your mentor
- Bring up new topics that are important to you at any point and give feedback to your mentor.
- Take the initiative to ask for feedback. Feedback, although difficult to hear at times, is critical to your personal and professional growth and development. Demonstrate that you are open to hear ideas and suggestions to bring out your best and overcome any blind spots. Get feedback on specific issues also, for example, how you come across to others, etc., if this concerns you. Ask for specific details to ensure you understand specific behaviors.
- Tell your mentor how you prefer to receive feedback, (for example, direct, with humor, softened). Don't get defensive. Thank your mentor for being honest with you. Remember, if your mentor was not invested in you, he/she would probably not take on this role as mentor. Honest feedback gives you an opportunity to forge a path toward your potential.

## Development Planner

Part of driving the relationship involves developing, maintaining, and adjusting your goals make sure you are getting the most out of the relationship.

- Maintain a mentoring plan and work with your mentor to set up goals, developmental activities, and time frames.
- Prepare what goals and objectives you have to meet expectations and improve your skillset. Be prepared to ask for specific guidance and advice on your goals, plans and strategic ideas. The more specific you can be, the easier it will be for your mentor to help you.
- Work with mentors to achieve a mutually agreed-upon set of goals and expectations for the mentoring relationship.
- Mentoring plans may shift and alter over time as your needs become more evident. Be open to making changes to your plan and adapting to shifts in what you think is important.

- You may find that your main goals and objectives have shifted to another area all together after discussion with your mentor and engaging in different activities. Keeping a record of these shifts is a good way to document your progress and growth.

## Resource Partner

Your mentor may introduce you to new contacts as part of your mentorship. It is important to approach these opportunities as a partner and follow through on making contact.

- Work with your mentor to seek resources for learning; identify people and information that might be helpful.
- Engage with contacts that your mentor suggests and introduces to you.
- Engage in assignments and tasks that your mentor suggests for you to improve your development.
- Report back to mentor about communications with contacts and how they have impacted your work going forward.
- Track and organize contacts for help in future assignments and documentation toward completion of goals.
- Track and record plans, goals and objectives that are determined by both parties.

## Model

- You will often serve as a model of what you have learned from your mentor. It is important that you demonstrate what you have learned in ongoing interactions with your mentor. Modeling new behaviors will also encourage your mentor to share more with you and demonstrate that you value what you have learned.
- Demonstrate that you have followed advice or commitments for action at every opportunity, even if you have modified your plan. Model behavior that you have learned from your mentor in professional settings. Be sure to report these instances to your mentor to demonstrate your willingness to learn and adapt and to demonstrate your appreciation.
- Model behavior learned in the mentorship at team meetings or in situations where what you have learned would be helpful to your colleagues and peers.

## Professional

The success of the mentoring relationship often depends on interacting with your mentor in a professional manner and treating the relationship as if it is a professional work relationship. A deeper relationship may develop over time, but it is important to maintain a professional relationship at all times.

- Assume the mentoring connection will be strictly professional. This does not mean you cannot be yourself, or you cannot be friendly.
- Be responsible - always be considerate and respect your mentor's time; express appreciation for assistance given; make only positive or neutral comments about your mentor to others.
- Return phone calls promptly and be on time with commitments or meetings. If your mentor offers a specific time frame of availability, respect his or her wishes by following through. Only extend the time of your contact if your mentor initiates or insists to extend to complete a task or discussion.
- Maintain confidentiality. Often what your mentor tells you in confidence is not to be shared with others. As you expect your private comments to be held in confidence, your mentor has a right to expect the same courtesy from you.
- Respect your mentor's confidence and trust. If you have concerns about anything said or done by your mentor, try to resolve it within the mentoring program.

## Trainee

Approach a mentorship as if you are a trainee, who is learning a new set of skills. But also make sure to incorporate what you learn from your mentorship into a growing arsenal of skills that you receive from a variety of sources.

- A mentee is also a "trainee" who should blend mentoring with other training approaches. The mentee must participate in internal and external training programs, in addition to seeking the mentor's professional advice. By participating in other programs, the mentee becomes more well-rounded and versatile employee.
- Try to incorporate information received in training with what you have learned from your mentor in order to create your own professional and philosophical approach.

## Teacher

Opportunities may arise during the course of your Mentorship for you to teach something to your mentor. This can be a positive way to show your mentor that you appreciate what they have taught you.

- Look for opportunities to give back to your mentor; share any information that you think might be valuable.
- Provide any useful information or new tools that you have learned in your research, trainings, and workshops that your mentor may not be familiar with.
- If applicable and agreed upon, coach your mentor on new tools, such as software or other applications and train on use.



## Additional Resources

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### CSP Website

The mentoring program is designed to adapt to the needs of its participants. We provide up-to-date resources and materials to help you achieve your goals in this program. For more information, please visit: [CSPmentorshipprogram.com](http://CSPmentorshipprogram.com)

### Mentoring Program Contacts

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For more information and or to provide feedback, please contact us at:

[CSPmentoringprogram@parks.ca.gov](mailto:CSPmentoringprogram@parks.ca.gov)



THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE CSP MENTORSHIP PROGRAM