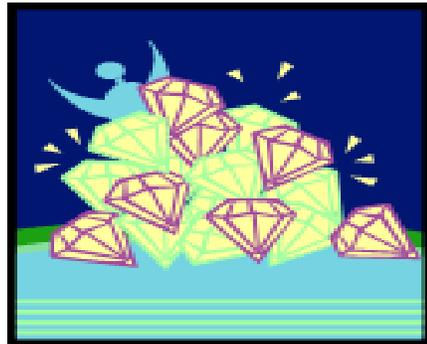




GUIDANCE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY MENTORING SESSIONS (GEMS) PROGRAM HANDBOOK



**National Weather Service
Office of Science and Technology**

September 2012

CONTACT INFORMATION

The GEMS Mentoring Program with funding provided by:

Mr. Charly Wells, Director

Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management (OEODM)

301/713-0692

Mr. Tim McClung

Office of Science and Technology, Science Plans Branch

301/713-3557 x169

The GEMS Mentoring Program is managed and coordinated by:

Ms. Amy Haase

301/713-0056 ext. 201

Ms. Jacqueline Gregory

301/713-3391 ext. 111

Mrs. Tamarah Curtis

301/713-0023 x117

Ms. Carla Wallace

301/713-0090 x176

Previous GEMS Collaborators

Ms. Emily Barnes

Ms. Allison Monarski

Table of Contents

<i>Section</i>	<i>page</i>
Contact information	i
1. The NWS Approach to Mentoring	
1.1 Introduction	
1.2 General Policy of the GEMS Mentoring Program	
2. Overview of the GEMS Mentoring Program	
2.1 Purpose of Implementing the GEMS Mentoring Program	
2.2 Management	
2.3 What is a Mentor?	
2.4 Different Types of Mentoring	
2.5 Formal and Informal Mentoring Programs	
2.6 GEMS Mentoring Program Benefits	
2.7 Roles and Responsibilities	
3. Administration and Management of the GEMS Mentoring Program	
3.1 Administration	
3.2 Program Length	
3.3 Time Requirement	
3.4 Mentor Matching Process	
3.5 Program Training	
3.6 Program Evaluation	
4. Mentoring Program Guidelines	
4.1 Program Guidelines	
4.2 Participants	
4.3 Eligibility Requirements	
4.4 Mentor/Mentee Agreement	
4.5 Successful Mentors	
4.6 Successful Mentees	
5. Application Procedures for the GEMS Mentoring Program	
ATTACHMENT	
GEMS Mentoring Program: Frequently Asked Questions	

Section 1

The NWS Approach to Mentoring

1.1 Introduction

The National Weather Service (NWS) recognizes the value of **mentoring** as an instrument of organizational learning. The NWS' mentoring programs provide an opportunity for successful individuals (**mentors**) to share knowledge and advice with new or junior employees (**mentees**). Mentoring as an interactive mechanism will not only improve the skills of seasoned NWS employees but also enhance professional and career skills of new employees entering the agency. The mentor can help employees learn to handle various situations, enhance their developmental skills, and avoid some of the pitfalls that can potentially side track a career or delay promotion opportunities.

The NWS believes that long-term organizational success is worth the time, attention, and resources required to make the OS&T **GEMS Mentoring Program** both effective and successful. The NWS recognizes that mentoring programs are an integral part of NWS culture and have the potential of broadening skills, experience, and expertise while building relationships throughout the organization.

The general objectives of organizational mentoring programs are to:

- Enhance Career Development
- Improve and Effectively Manage Diversity in the Workplace
- Improve Morale

1.2 General Policy of the GEMS Mentoring Program

All NWS employees are eligible to participate in the **GEMS Mentoring Program**. The mentors and mentee may be any grade level. Mentors cannot be the immediate supervisor of the mentee. All participants of the program are encouraged to commit to a one-year formal mentoring partnership. At the end of the year, the formal support will end. However, participants will be invited to continue their partnership on an informal basis including future mentoring activities. Time spent on developmental activities will vary depending on the agreement between the mentor and mentee. It is recommended that partners meet at least once every two weeks for one-hour during work hours. Each partnership will work out an arrangement that is best for both parties.

Section 2

Overview of the GEMS Mentoring Program

2.1 Purpose of Implementing the GEMS Mentoring Program

- **Skills enhancement** – helps highly competent staff to impart their expertise to other employees
- **Knowledge management/knowledge transfer** – provides for the interchange/exchange of information and knowledge between employees within and between different departments
- **Career development** – helps employees to plan, develop, and manage their careers
- **Leadership and management development** – encourages the development of leadership competencies
- **Professional identity** – allows younger employees to learn professional communication and behavior
- **Enhancement of formal education** – helps to bridge the gap between theory and practice through knowledge and hands-on experience
- **Organizational culture** – helps to communicate the values, vision, and mission of the organization as well as the organizational culture

2.2 Management

The **GEMS Mentoring Program** is managed and administered by the OS&T and OEODM. This office will provide resource support and monitor program activities to ensure that objectives are met. The program will be evaluated periodically by OS&T and OEODM. Feedback will be solicited from both mentors and mentees.

2.3 What is a Mentor?

- Person who shares experience, knowledge and wisdom about a particular occupation, their occupation or about the workplace in general.
- “One who is a trusted counselor or guide” - *Webster’s Dictionary*
- “Anyone who has a beneficial life-style or style–altering effect on another person, generally as a result of personal one-on-one contact; one who offers knowledge, insight, perspective, or wisdom that is helpful to another person in a relationship which goes beyond duty and obligation.” *Gordon Shea*

2.4 Different Types of Mentoring

- **Tutoring**
Passing on knowledge; identifying and closing gaps in a learner’s knowledge and

needs.

➤ **Coaching**

Providing specialized attention to the individual being coached to help improve performance (e.g., in making a presentation).

➤ **Counseling**

Providing feedback to help improve individual behavior or general performance of duties and to align the interests of the individual with the interests of the organization.

➤ **Mentoring**

Using the mentor's knowledge, insight, perspective and wisdom to help mentees achieve their personal satisfaction and fulfillment. Mentoring may also include aspects of coaching and counseling.

2.5 Formal and Informal Mentoring Programs

The **GEMS Mentoring Program** is designed as a formal mentoring program. It is structured, has oversight, and has clear and specific organizational goals. Some agencies assign mentors to new hires as an 'information source' which allows new employees the opportunity to better navigate the new work environment. In contrast, informal mentoring has minimal to no structure and oversight and may not have clear or specific goals.

2.6 GEMS Mentoring Program Benefits

For the Mentor

- Renews their enthusiasm for the role of expert
- Obtains a greater understanding of the barriers experienced at lower levels or in other departments
- Enhances skills in coaching, counseling, and listening
- Demonstrates expertise and shares organizational and technical knowledge
- Increases cultural and generational awareness

For the Mentee

- Complements ongoing formal study and/or training and development activities
- Strengthens professional and technical understanding of subject areas
- Develops new and/or different perspectives
- Increases career networks and receives greater agency exposure

2.7 Roles and Responsibilities

The **GEMS Mentoring Program** Team is responsible for all mentoring activities and assisting in coordinating mentor assignments for each participant. They will host informative events to attract new participation, schedule and post flyers training opportunities, maintain open communication with management about the status of the program, track progress, and provide results of evaluations as necessary.

Role of the Mentor

- Help mentee to develop and expand professional and technical knowledge
- Serve as an unbiased confidant and counselor with whom the mentee may discuss work-related issues and other concerns perceived as impeding job performance.
- Provide objective and positive suggestions on appropriate office conduct and work ethics.
- Provide objective and positive suggestions on how the mentee may improve work proficiency and productivity.
- Participate in all programs activities by attending orientation, mentor/mentee meetings and other scheduled events. Participation is **required** unless workload is negatively impacted.
- Work with mentee to develop both short- and long-term goals
- Be willing to be collaborative and patient and to give and receive feedback
- Be willing to share experiences, insights, and skills to help mentees
- Respect the mentee's individuality and privacy
- Maintain confidentiality

Role of the Mentee

- Accept responsibility for the mentor/mentee relationship by calling the mentor and initiating contact for meetings. The mentee is responsible for developing and fostering the mentoring relationship.
- Participate in all program activities by attending orientation, mentor/mentee meetings and other scheduled events.
- Be willing to share experiences, insights, and skills to help mentors better understand your capabilities and motivations
- Help mentors to understand your current job and where you need to improve performance, productivity, and effectiveness
- Develop short- and/or long-term goals at the onset of the mentor/mentee relationship.
- Accept feedback and be patient and cooperative.
- Accept the program boundaries (i.e., the mentor is a career counselor, not an advocate).
- Use the program to enhance present career direction and identify future skills necessary for career growth.

PLEASE NOTE: This program does not serve as a means for promotions, although it can provide career enhancement towards career opportunities.

Section 3

Administration and Management of the GEMS Mentoring Program

3.1 Administration

The GEMS Team will pick members for a Selection Committee for matching mentors and mentees based on similar areas of interest and other criteria. The GEMS Team will provide orientation and training to mentors and mentees. Mentors will have a formal meeting with the mentee once every two weeks for at least one hour to build confidence, and explore any issues, new challenges, or simply to gain a different perspective on things. This will provide the mentee(s) with a sounding board to explore career options and open up new communication channels and learning opportunities.

Mentors serve as a coach, teacher, counselor, and challenger to help the mentee handle various situations and avoid pitfalls that can develop, especially early in the mentee's career. **Supervisory approval is required to participate in the program.**

3.2 Program Length

The pilot program runs for one year which includes time for completing training for participants and pairing mentor and mentees. After that time, the OS&T will make adjustments to the program and handbook for the Director's approval. The Program is designed to last on a formal basis for a period of one year. Each participating mentee and mentor must agree to work together for that year.

3.3 Time Requirement

A reasonable amount of **official time** (up to 2 hours per month) will be allowed for mentoring meetings. At the discretion of the mentee and mentor, other sessions may be scheduled on their own time. Each mentoring relationship will vary according to needs and interests. There are no restrictions on informal mentoring. Participants are urged to frequently "check-in" with each other via informal phone calls or emails.

3.4 Mentor Matching Process

The mentees (mentors) shall select three potential mentors (mentees) that would best match his/her needs. He/She shall select from a list of eligible applicants and submit his/her selection to the GEMS Selection Committee for final determination. They will propose tentative matches of mentors and mentees. The GEMS Selection Committee should consist of a mix of junior-, mid-, and senior-level personnel. They will match the mentor and mentee based on similar areas of interest or other criteria.

Efforts will be made to match mentees with mentors who can best support their respective developmental needs. Both mentee and mentor shall agree upon final matches. A system has been incorporated in the **GEMS Mentoring Program** in the event that an initial match or ongoing relationship is not satisfactory; provisions will be made for re-matching. The mentor and mentee may turn to the GEMS Team for guidance and assistance. Unsatisfactory mentoring relationships may be terminated at any time during the one-year period by contacting the GEMS Team. An attempt will be made to match the mentee with another mentor. Normally re-matching will only be undertaken during the first six months of the program.

3.5 Program Training

The OS&T and OEODM will serve as the program sponsors and will provide mandatory orientation for mentor and mentees. The orientation will consist of an overview of the mentoring program, expectations, time commitments, other aspects of the program, and help addressing questions for potential participating members of the mentoring program. The program shall provide a developmental training session for mentors and mentees. All mentors and mentees must receive formal training after being chosen to participate in the program. Development training will focus on the specific relationship between the mentor and mentee. Through these sessions, mentors and mentees will learn how to develop a successful mentoring relationship. The workshop will help mentors develop listening, advising, and coaching skills. The workshop will also help mentees work with mentors to develop goals and a learning plan.

Specific training modules include:

- Goal setting
- What it takes to be successful
- Developing a positive attitude
- Generational differences
- Verbal and non-verbal communication
- Communicating for successful outcomes
- Four levels of listening
- Coaching and advising skills
- Avoiding emotional leakage

3.6 Program Evaluation

Program evaluation is an essential component of a successful mentoring program. The **GEMS Mentoring Program** will evaluate the effectiveness of mentor-mentee relationships and outcomes:

- Obtain periodic feedback on:
 - Positive outcomes
 - Areas of concern
 - Need for improvement or adjustment

Section 4

Mentoring Program Guidelines

4.1 Program Guidelines

The **Program** operates under the following guidelines:

- Both parties must keep all information discussed in sessions confidential within the agency's ethical parameters and legal restrictions.
- No matches will be made within the supervisor/manager chain of command.
- Participation is optional.
- Mentors and mentees in the program must have training in order to participate.
- Participants are recommended to meet at least once every other week for one hour during the formal mentoring process.

4.2 Participants

The **GEMS Mentoring Program** will start with mentor/mentee partnerships from OS&T only, and will consider expanding to other line offices later. Applicants who wish to choose their own mentee/mentor partner should write the name on their application and encourage this person to apply. Both people must apply to be matched. GEMS will consider preferences but cannot guarantee a match.

4.3 Eligibility Requirements

Participating as a mentor or mentee is strictly voluntary; however, the following requirements **must** be met:

- A permanent full-time NWS employee.
- Supervisory approval for your participation in the program. This requirement applies to both mentees and mentors.
- Mentors and mentees can be of any grade level.

4.4 Mentee/Mentor Agreement

Each mentor/mentee pair will develop an agreement that will identify a set of measurable goals to be completed during the program year. Examples of an agreement will be provided by the OS&T. Mentors and mentees will report meetings to the GEMS Team via the Google form provided.

4.5 Successful Mentors

To be an effective and successful mentor, you should:

- Be able to serve as a role model and resource person for a mentee.
- Demonstrate proficiency and initiative in your own career.
- Commit to providing counsel and guidance to the mentee on how to achieve his/her full potential.
- Demonstrate patience and cooperativeness when dealing with others.
- Be able to provide feedback on career and professional issues which could impede a mentee's career development.
- Ask constructive questions.
- Be a good listener.
- Exhibit tact, diplomacy, and sensitivity in working with others who may be from a different age group, background, or culture.

4.6 Successful Mentees

To be an effective and successful mentee, you should:

- Be prepared to make a serious effort to set career goals and achieve them.
- Commit yourself to take the initiative to foster a positive relationship with your mentor.
- Listen to your mentor's suggestions, evaluate them and take appropriate action.
- Be prepared to commit time and effort to work toward your goals in addition to the official time for the mentoring partnership.

Section 5
Application Procedures
for the GEMS Mentoring Program

Interested mentors and mentees must apply to participate in the **GEMS Mentoring Program** by sending an email to nws.gems.ost@noaa.gov. Please include the following information in your email:

1. Name and organization
2. If you wish to participate as a mentor, a mentee, or both.
3. What topics you would like to be mentored in or provide mentoring.
4. The names of who you would like to be paired with, if you have anyone in mind.

GEMS Mentoring Program Frequently Asked Questions

Why do we need a Mentoring Program?

Many employees who have significant potential do not have mentors to help them identify their strengths, improve their performance, and set career goals. The **GEMS Mentoring Program** is a link to bring together people who want to help others learn how to achieve their goals and those who are willing to take the initiative and seek a mentor's guidance. At the organizational level, the agency hopes to encourage the use of mentoring as a developmental tool."

What are the program's goals and objectives?

The **GEMS Mentoring Program's** goal is to provide employees with the (a) coaching, (b) job and career information, (c) feedback counseling and, (d) caring a mentor can give. Mentoring, as the foundation of the program, is an approach that provides employees with the kind of support that often results in their making substantial contributions to the agency. The NWS ultimately hopes to incorporate mentoring into the agency's culture as "a business necessity" rather than something restricted to the fortunate few.

For mentees, what are the objectives?

- Gain exposure to different options, perspectives, and organizational cultures.
- Expand the range of contacts and develop an ability to create their own networks.
- Discover and understand "the rules of the game" in the work world.
- Develop a greater sense of career direction and improved job performance.

What can the program do for me as a mentee?

It is up to you to take the initiative and take action. You must set your own goals for self improvement, better work performance, and long-term career strategy. Your mentor will be there to serve as a guide, to help you refine your goals, and to support you as you work towards achieving them. However, it is up to you to personally achieve the goals you have set for yourself. Your mentor may not meet with your supervisor or advocate on your behalf. He/She will help you refine your career plans, but cannot intervene for you. NWS's Mentoring Program does not incorporate progressive steps for advancement. It is not intended as a means to achieve automatic promotions.

What can my mentor do for me?

Your mentor can help you make a plan, progress, and encourage you to pursue it strategically. Your mentor can tell you how others see you and suggest ways to make positive changes. But your mentor can't make a decision for you, run your career, make calls for you, or use his or her influence for you. You have to take the initiative to do those things for yourself.

Will participation in the program lead to a promotion?

NWS' Mentoring Program is not an "Upward Mobility" program or a program that incorporates progressive steps for advancement. It is not intended as a means to achieve automatic promotions.

How do mentors benefit from the program?

Apart from the satisfaction of helping another person reach goals he or she has set, many mentors develop a new perspective, learn about another organization, gain additional insight into their own paths and values, and go through a reflective process similar to the mentee's. As they help someone else evaluate their career issues and goals, mentors often find themselves doing some worthwhile soul searching about their own careers as well. Given the opportunity to personally witness the positive impact of mentoring on the mentees, mentors are often inspired to reach out to their employees in more supportive ways or to seek informal mentors for themselves.

What is expected of the mentees?

Each mentee is responsible for defining a career goal and strategy (with the help of the mentor) and for striving to achieve career goals. At the logistical level, the mentee is responsible for meeting with the mentor, as recommended, two hours per month for the year of the program, developing an agreement with the mentor and sending it to the GEMS on time, filling out the Google form after each meeting, responding to the GEMS calls to ensure the pair is progressing, evaluating their progress in quarterly reports, sharing information with other mentees through brown bag lunches and other informal gatherings, and participating in a final evaluation sessions.

How many mentees and mentors will be selected?

Anyone can be a mentor if he/she is willing to make the commitment. A mentor needs to be able to listen, offer suggestions, and maintain confidentiality. A mentor does not have to intervene for the mentee or tell them what to do. The program recruiting process is to ensure the best possible match.

What training will be provided?

Mandatory training is the foundation of the program so that both mentors and mentees start the GEMS Mentoring Program with an understanding of how the mentoring process works, and specific goals they can work towards. Upon applying, mentors and mentees agree to attend all training sessions, if selected for the program.

What if I know someone I'd like to be matched with?

Both people must apply. Please indicate on both of your application forms that you would like to be matched. GEMS doesn't guarantee the match, since it has to consider the needs of the group as a whole but will attempt to accommodate you.

How will a mentor and mentee work together?

The mentor and mentee will work together to develop an agreement that indicates what each is responsible for, what the goals of the relationship are, how they assess how they are doing, and any other pertinent information.

What if I'm not comfortable with my mentor/mentee?

The purpose of your first meeting is to see whether the two of you are compatible. The match is not final until you have both approved it. The GEMS will check in with you to see how your relationship is going and whether you are moving towards the goals you set. Please let the GEMS know if things aren't working the way you had hoped. Often, a problem in a relationship is a question of miscommunication that can be cleared up through open discussion. Occasionally rematching will be necessary, but normally re-matching will be considered only during the first three to six months of the program.

How much time can I spend with my mentor/mentee?

You are allowed up to two hours of official time each month to meet. It is up to you to negotiate arrange meetings your supervisor to ensure that mentoring does not interfere with your regular duties. You and your partner may agree to meet more than the 2 hours a month. Additional time must be spent outside of the normal working hours "on your own time," e.g. during meal periods.

How long does the program last?

The formal program lasts one year.

How are supervisors involved in the program?

Supervisors benefit by having employees participating in the program as either mentors or mentees. Mentors develop stronger coaching and counseling skills and expand their networks through the training provided and by meeting with the mentees. Mentees have a strong sense of direction and often show more motivation on the job when they have a goal. They seek feedback and respond to it, and hear from their mentor on areas for improvement. Because the relationship between the mentor/mentee is confidential, it is up to the mentee to communicate with the supervisor. A program ground rule is that mentors do not contact supervisors, or vice versa. At the end of the year, respective supervisors will be recognized along with the mentors and mentees.

What if I apply and I am not selected?

If you are not selected as a mentor or mentee, you will receive a notification from the GEMS.

Where does the program fit in the NWS approach to career development?

It is important for all of us to assess our skills, develop mental needs, and job situation on a regular basis. Periodic self-evaluations can help identify the challenges we currently face and the skills and personal resources we need to successfully meet challenges. The **GEMS Mentoring Program** is a tool, which enables the participants to make a self-assessment based on the training that they will receive from other accredited program areas. The program will consist of a diversified group of participants who will share experiences, be coached, empowered, and encouraged to approach their individual career development.