



Introduction

The MPRA Mentorship Program is a professional development program designed to bridge the gap between veteran association members and emerging new professionals. It provides opportunities for exchanging information, ideas, and resources between a Mentor and a Mentee. Through a collaborative, mutually beneficial partnership, Mentors and Mentees will gain new networking opportunities, unique experiences and perspectives, and build a relationship to foster the park and recreation profession. Instead of a one-to-one pairing, the MPRA Mentorship Program will create small group mentoring cohorts of 2-3 mentees with 2-3 mentors to improve the chances of connection and sustainability of momentum.

Overview

Goals of the program:

- To bridge the gap between veteran members of the association and new professionals, providing opportunities for the exchange of information, ideas, and resources between mentors and mentees
- Allow newer professionals in the field and newer members of MPRA to gain networking opportunities outside of their park and recreation department, develop contacts within the field, receive advice, and gain perspective through their mentor
- To foster a collaborative, mutually beneficial partnership between experienced members of MPRA and young professionals

Benefits to departments whose employees participate:

- Improved employee interaction contributing to higher job performance
- Learn the culture and duties of their job faster
- Develop future leaders
- Form partnerships with other departments
- Possible increase in retention
- Higher level of employee commitment and loyalty to the profession

Oversight

MPRA Staff manages the Mentorship Program with the support and guidance of the Connection Team of the 2023-27 Strategic Plan, in conjunction with the Young Professional Section

Program Guidelines

MENTOR:

Benefits

- Exposure to new ideas, educational methods, perspectives, new technologies, etc., through conversations with the mentee
- The opportunity to help the mentee professionally
- Opportunity to pass the legacy of information, history, and stories to the next generation of employees
- New professional contacts through the mentee's contacts
- Further develop coaching, communication, and counseling skills
- Demonstration of commitment to MPRA and the professional field
- Opportunities for personal reflection
- Knowing that the profession will be enhanced as a result of your efforts

Guidelines

- Be honest and constructive
- Share your experiences, both good and bad
- Get to know your mentee
- Encourage communication
- Be available and approachable to your mentee

Requirements

- Be an MPRA Member
- Willing to commit 1 year to the program
- Put an honest effort and sufficient time toward the relationship
 - Make a minimum of 6 contacts a year
 - Spend a recommended 1-2 hours per month of time
- Provide a brief evaluation of your experiences

MENTEE:

Benefits

- Learn new ideas, knowledge of past experiences (what worked and what didn't), interpersonal and leadership skills from a prominent park and recreation professional
- Receive encouragement to reach for higher goals and take risks with the oversight of an experienced professional

- Gain self-confidence
- Gain insight into the culture of MPRA and of other departments
- Develop a relationship with a person who could serve as a role model, a sounding board to give feedback and criticism, and a source of stability if facing new challenges
- Expand your professional network
 - The opportunity to learn weaknesses and how to address them
 - Enhance your career

Guidelines

- Ask questions
- Accept advice and feedback graciously
- Be proactive in communicating with your mentor
- Be respectful of your mentor's time
- Learn from the experiences of your mentor
- Be honest and share your perspectives from your level

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The Program

Number of participants per year – unlimited

Application Process

Interested professionals should complete and submit an application during the application window. The Professional Development Committee will review applications and create mentorship matches focusing on compatible objectives, locations, and characteristics.

- Annual enrollment (or re-enrollment) open – October 1
- Enrollment deadline – October 31
- Staff and committee to match mentors and mentees by December 1 (a possible call for more Mentors, if necessary)
- Participants to be notified of their match by January 15
- Re-enroll annually to be paired with a new mentor/mentee
- Maintain a relationship with previous mentor(s) on your own for as long as you'd like

Resources

- In-person event held during the conference for those in attendance
- Email sent every other month with ideas and topics for mentors/mentees
- Program evaluation sent September 1
- Collaboration Opportunities:
 - Both parties could read the same book related to the profession and discuss through email or conference call
 - Watch a webinar together
 - Have a meal together at the conference
 - Mentors can invite mentees to join their department/section/group for a meal/meeting to meet new people and expand their professional network. (Especially if it's the mentee's first time at the conference and they don't know many people)
 - Attend a session together at the conference
 - Attend regional-level events and socials together
 - Schedule monthly conference calls to discuss projects that each other are working on
 - Bring a new topic to each conversation, i.e., "What's the best idea you ever had that didn't turn out the way you'd hoped?"
 - Attend Legislation Action Day together