

The Extension Mentoring Program for New Agents

Desk Reference Guide

North Carolina Cooperative Extension



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

-Steven Spielberg

North Carolina State University • NC A&T State University

Acknowledgements

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Committee

Members of the state-wide committee which framed the NCCE Mentoring Program are:

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Notes

Throughout this document there will be references made to NCCE and Cooperative Extension. Note that both of these terms refer to North Carolina Cooperative Extension.

“Mentee” always refers to the new agent who has been hired and who has been assigned a mentor.

“Mentor” always refers to the experienced agent who provides the mentoring.

“Regional Program Coordinators (RPCs)” refers to the North Carolina A&T State University administrators who are in roles similar to that of the “District Extension Directors (DEDs)” at North Carolina State University.

Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension (NCCE) Mentoring Program is to add an important element to the onboarding process for our new agents where they can develop a professional, educational and personal support system through the assignment of a designated mentor. The Mentoring Program provides a formalized relationship where the new agent will:

- learn about the importance of their role to NCCE and the citizens of North Carolina;
- build a relationship with a trusted advisor so that the new agent can be exposed to the culture, expectations and functions of NCCE;
- develop as an Extension professional with the support and guidance of not only their County Extension Director and colleagues, but also with the focused support and direction from their mentor.

This training manual serves as a guide for both the mentor and the mentee. **All mentors and mentees are required to read this manual in its entirety before the first meeting between mentor and mentee.**

Origins of “Mentor”

The term, “mentor,” originated from Greek mythology. “Mentor” was a loyal friend and advisor to the King of Ithaca, Odysseus. Odysseus had a son, Telemachus, and Mentor helped to raise Telemachus while Odysseus was away fighting the Trojan War. Mentor became not only Telemachus’ teacher, but he also served as the boy’s coach, counselor and protector, building a relationship based on trust. Today, “mentoring” is synonymous with the process by which mentors guide and guard others. Thus a “mentor” is someone who is seen as a trusted advisor and teacher who can share wisdom, support and direction.

Definition

Mentoring is defined as “a deliberate pairing of a more skilled or experienced person with a lesser skilled or experienced one, with the agreed-upon goal of having the lesser skilled person grow and develop specific competencies.”¹

The distinction is made between role models and mentors in that role models may never realize that they have influenced someone else. In The NCCE Mentoring Program, mentors and mentees are entering into a specific agreement to carry out a formalized mentoring relationship that facilitates the skill development, knowledge and expertise of the new agent.

¹ Murray, Margo (with Marna A. Owen). Beyond the myths and magic of mentoring; How to facilitate an effective mentoring program. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1991, p. xiv.

Mission, Vision, Philosophy and Goals of the NCCE Mentoring Program

Mentors have an important role in the personal and professional growth of their mentees. Mentors are integral to the mentee's integration into their career within Cooperative Extension. Given this, the **MISSION** of the NCCE Mentoring Program for New Agents is to provide our new hires with a trusted advisor who can guide them during their first year of employment so that the new hire can gain a strong understanding of Cooperative Extension and learn the skills to be successful in their role as an agent. The mission of Cooperative Extension is to "empower people and provide solutions." Mentors contribute to this mission by empowering their mentees and providing them with the solutions, support and insight they need to effectively serve the citizens of North Carolina.

The **VISION** of the NCCE Mentoring Program for New Agents is to establish a strong mentoring program where seasoned agents support and enhance the development of new hires so that new agents develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that promote their growth as both new members of Cooperative Extension and as individuals.

The following five statements communicate the **PHILOSOPHY** of the NCCE Mentoring Program:

- Mentoring is a partnership.
- Mentoring is a nurturing, professional relationship.
- Mentoring is communicating with one another.
- Mentoring enhances the development of the new agent.
- Mentoring benefits the mentee, the mentor and the organization.

The main **GOAL** of the NCCE Mentoring Program is to provide a professional and educational support system for new agents. This goal can be realized by achieving the following objectives:

- Educating new agents about Cooperative Extension's vision, mission and goals.
- Providing new agents with a historical overview of both Cooperative Extension and its role within the new agents' counties.
- Identifying resources and other employees in the organization who can serve as a resource for the new agents.
- Sharing with new agents the skills, knowledge and insights of an experienced and successful County Extension Agent so that the new agents can learn and gain what is needed to be successful in their roles.
- Fostering open communication and dialogue that leads to a happier, more productive and better trained new agent.
- Strengthening both the self-confidence and the leadership skills of new agents.

Mentoring Process Guidelines and Considerations

The following general guidelines will apply to each mentoring relationship and should be understood by both the mentor and the mentee:

- Mentors are selected based on the recommendations of the County Extension Directors (CEDs) and the District Extension Directors (DEDs)/Regional Program Coordinators (RPCs), and pairings are based on proximity and similarity of programmatic areas. Extension Organizational Development (EOD), has the primary responsibility for the oversight and administration of the Mentoring Program.
- Commitment to the formal mentoring process is for one (1) year. Each mentor will be asked to maintain contact with their mentee(s) for at least three (3) years, with the latter two years being more informal. Focus of the second year of mentoring is on the mentee's continued growth within their position and the mentee's professional development needs. For the third year, the focus is on the mentor continuing to serve as a "sounding board" and support for the mentee.
- The mentee will be provided notification of who their mentor is either prior to or on the first day of their employment with Cooperative Extension. The mentor should contact the mentee within the first week after the relationship has been determined/mentor assignment has been made.
- The mentor and mentee are required to meet face-to-face or online (through software such as Google Hangouts, Zoom or Skype) at least once a month during the first six months of the mentee's employment with Cooperative Extension. A minimum of six [6] face-to-face (or face-to-face online) visits should occur between the mentor and the mentee within the first year of the new agent's employment.
- Mentors and mentees should correspond frequently (at least once every two [2] to four [4] weeks) either by phone, e-mail, Skype, Google chat, or in-person. It is the responsibility of both participants to make sure that this communication occurs on a regular, on-going basis.
- "NO FAULT" Arrangement: Throughout a professional career, all employees face various challenges and changing circumstances which are often unexpected and may make it difficult to continue being a mentor. This Program operates with a NO FAULT philosophy that allows mentors and mentees to request changes or reassignments without fear of repercussions. The mentor or mentee may request a change or release from the assignment by contacting Extension Organizational Development.
- The mentor may recommend that the mentee work with other professionals with the approval of the County Extension Director (CED).
- The mentor and the County Extension Director (CED) will communicate about the progress of the mentee throughout the process.
- Both the mentor and the mentee will come prepared to their meetings so that their scheduled time together can be productive and effective.

- Both the mentor and the mentee will read this manual and familiarize themselves with the respective roles within the mentoring process as well as the suggested topics and activities to engage in over the course of the mentoring relationship.

Mentor Qualifications, Selection and Training

Mentors undoubtedly have a strong influence on a mentee which, ultimately, will lead to an impact on the organizational system. Given this, it is essential that mentors have the following

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Commitment to the mission of North Carolina Cooperative Extension;
- Demonstrated and effective skills in program development, marketing, alliance-building, program evaluation and the overall programming process;
- Appropriate subject matter expertise;
- Knowledge of the policies and procedures of North Carolina State University and/or NC A&T State University, North Carolina Cooperative Extension, and their respective counties;
- A minimum of five (5) years of County Extension experience;
- Currently serving in a discipline similar to that of the new agent.

In the mentor selection process, preferences and priority will be given to individuals who possess the following **CHARACTERISTICS** (listed below in no particular order):

- Team player; positive attitude; self-confident and well-skilled in their role;
- Trustworthy; ethical; professional behavior;
- Respected by peers and shows respect for others;
- Listens and communicates effectively;
- Patient, encouraging and caring; recognizes and encourages excellence;
- Appreciates and encourages diversity;
- Flexible, adaptable and is receptive to new ideas.

SELECTION of mentors involves administrators within NCCE. Mentors are identified by their District Extension Directors (DEDs)/Regional Program Coordinators (RPCs) and their County Extension Directors (CEDs). These names and additional information (position, subject matter, years of employment in Extension, contact information, county) are submitted Extension Organizational Development (EOD) office. EOD will work with the DEDs/RPCs and CEDs to make assignments and appropriate matches as new agents are hired. CALS Personnel will provide a list of the new hires each month so that matching can occur either before or on the new agent's date of hire.

TRAINING of mentors will occur once they have been selected, is required, and will be face-to-face group trainings. Mentors have to attend the training before they can be matched with a new agent. The training will cover information important to the success of the mentoring relationship. Mentees will receive the training manual during the New Hire Orientation as well as additional information about the Mentoring Program via a webinar.

Benefits

Following is an outline of some of the general benefits of mentoring. However, it is important for mentors to realize that they play an important role not only in the success of their mentees, but also in the overall success of the organization. Sharing their wisdom, time and experiences with those who will continue to carry Cooperative Extension forward is gratefully appreciated.

Recipient	Benefit
Mentor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced personal growth and development. • Revitalized interest in work. • Close relationship with the new agent/mentee. • Pride from watching the intern develop. • New ideas and perspectives generated. • Development and promotion of positive aspects of NCCE. • Gives something back to the organization (time, talent, wisdom). • Pass on knowledge to the next generation of staff. • Sense of accomplishments through mentee's success. • Help with organization's goals and future.
New Hire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive atmosphere. • Information on technical, programming and process skills. • Development of new skills. • Development of confidence in his/her new role. • Knowledge of Cooperative Extension and the land-grant system. • Insight into organizational aspects of NCCE. • Head start on future career leading to better performance and productivity in their specialized areas. • Professional networking. • Non-evaluative feedback. • Opportunity to be successful. • Will learn the multiple levels of being an Extension Agent.
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced performance of the new agent. • Increases the employee retention rate and reduces turnover. • Saves funding needs to recruit, interview and replace new staff as a result of losing new hires prematurely. • Positive work environment and organizational climate. • Development of future leaders. • Development of new talent. • Continuity of organizational culture. • Increases teamwork. • Increases productivity. • Creates a cohesive and creative Extension system.

Expectations of a Mentor

Thank you for agreeing to take on the role of Mentor for a new Extension Agent in North Carolina Cooperative Extension (NCCE). The Mentoring Program is part of the NCCE Onboarding process, and the goal of the Mentoring Program is to provide newly hired agents with a mentor from their area of specialization for one year. Upon receiving their assignment of a mentee, the mentor needs to initiate contact with the new hire within five (5) days. Please know that your role as a mentor means that you agree to devote time and energy to the mentoring relationship; this same expectation is true for the mentee.

You were chosen as a mentor because you exhibit a majority of these characteristics: you have extensive knowledge and experience within North Carolina Cooperative Extension; you have a commitment to the mission of NCCE; you have good communication skills; you have established a network of resources; and you have had experience managing individuals and groups. You are respected among your peers, your opinions are sought by others, and you both talk and exhibit teamwork. You are also open to new ideas and to supporting the next generation of Extension professionals.

Mentors convey the organization's culture, traditions, values and strategies for accomplishing goals to their mentee. Mentors also provide non-evaluative support for newly hired agents and an open atmosphere for dialogue. In addition, mentors should:

- Pass on organizational skills.
- Listen and question.
- Show how to use the ERS system to accomplish goals.
- Teach specific competencies.
- Praise and demonstrate trust.
- Build confidence within their mentee.
- Encourage appropriate risk taking.
- Provide support and counsel.
- Act as a role model and maintain a professional relationship with the mentee.
- Assist their mentee in reaching goals.
- Give constructive feedback.
- Foster creativity.
- Offer career advice.
- Assist with self-evaluation.
- Help identify activities that could lead to frustration or burnout; those activities with high time commitment and low impact.
- Provide networking opportunities.
- Exhibit leadership.
- Discuss mentee's accomplishments.
- Act as a colleague, ally and co-learner.

[list continued on next page]

- Initiate contact and follow up with the mentee on a regular basis.
- Maintain confidentiality – this is essential for the mentoring relationship to be successful given that private or sensitive information may be shared. **However**, if something concerning the mentor or the mentee needs to be discussed with others, it should first be discussed within the mentoring relationship. In addition, if there are concerns of an illegal nature or concerns about the health/safety of the mentor or mentee, these matters can and should be discussed with the appropriate CED, DED/RPC, EOD or Extension Personnel. Any matters that cannot be resolved between the parties involved need to follow the appropriate chain of command: CED then, if not resolved at that level, DED or RPC.

The mentor has an important role in the development of the new agent. However, there are certain things mentors should AVOID in the mentoring relationship:

- Criticizing the mentee.
- Trying to solve all of the mentee's problems.
- Trying to give advice to the mentee on everything.
- Encouraging the mentee to be totally dependent upon you.
- Complaining about your own problems to the mentee.
- Being too busy and not following up when the mentee needs your support or guidance.
- Taking responsibility for the mentee's programs or duties.

Both the mentor and the mentee have many things to juggle in their day-to-day work schedules. Given this, mentors need to plan a calendar soon with their mentee in order to schedule and maintain on-going interactions. The mentor should meet in person with their mentee every month to discuss progress either in person, over the phone or online.

As a mentor, it is important to remember that your mentee may have limited knowledge and experience. Get to know him or her as an individual. Use this knowledge of her/his abilities, interests and goals as a foundation upon which to build during the next twelve months.

Mentors, if willing to do so (and based on need), may have more than one mentee. Information on group mentoring and how to handle this process will be provided during the training on the Mentoring Program.

One other consideration regarding the mentoring relationship is that the mentor can, and will, gain knowledge and insight from the mentee as well. Mentoring is a "two-way street" where both parties can learn from each other and benefit from the mentoring relationship.

Again, thank you for taking on this role. We, the Extension Mentoring Committee, know that you will grow and learn from this experience. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Extension Organizational Development (EOD).

To begin the mentoring relationship and continuing the process:

- Write a letter to your assigned mentee (See Appendix A).
- Send your mentee a copy of your completed Mentor/Mentee Biographical Sketch within the first week of your mentee's employment (See Appendix B and page 31).
- Send copies of the letter and biographical sketch to the mentee's CED.
- Call the mentee to initiate the relationship.
- Get started early! Set up the first face-to-face meeting as soon as possible and no later than one month of the new agent's hire date.
- Within the first 30 days of the mentoring assignment, the EOD office will check in with both the mentor and the mentee. This check in will be in the form of a phone call or an e-mail. The purpose of the check-in is to verify that initial contact has been made and progress is being experienced.
- Check-ins with the mentor and mentee will be done every 3 to 4 months by EOD to see how the mentor relationship is progressing. EOD will either e-mail or call the mentor and the mentee to check in with them informally.
- The first formal evaluation will be done at the 6-month mark of the year-long mentoring assignment when an online survey will be emailed to both the mentee and the mentor from EOD. The formal evaluation will be done at the conclusion of the one-year mentoring relationship.
- If at any point during the mentoring process a change needs to be made within the mentoring relationship, EOD will work with the respective CED and DED or RPC to make those changes.
- Upon completion of the first year of the formal mentoring process, the mentor should complete the Mentoring Program Evaluation Form (Appendix C) and submit it to both the mentee's CED and Extension Organizational Development (EOD) within one month of the mentor/mentee relationship officially terminating.
- As stated earlier, mentors and mentees are expected to informally maintain their mentoring relationship for another two (2) years after the first year of formal mentoring. Although no formal evaluation will take place, mentors are asked to continue to be available to their mentees for consultation, guidance, professional development suggestions, and other work-related topics of discussion.

General Roles for Mentors

Communicator

- Encourages two-way exchange of information.
- Listens to the mentee's career concerns and responds appropriately.
- Establishes an environment for open interaction.
- Schedules uninterrupted time to meet with the mentee.
- Acts as a sounding board for ideas and concerns.

Coach

- Works with mentee to identify and understand career-related skills, interests and values.
- Helps mentee evaluate the appropriateness of career options.
- Helps mentee plan strategies to achieve mutually agreed-upon personal goals.
- Helps to clarify performance goals and developmental needs.
- Teaches managerial and technical skills.
- Reinforces effective on-the-job performances.
- Recommends specific behaviors in which the mentee needs improvement.
- Clarifies and communicates organizational goals and objectives.
- Serves as a role model to demonstrate successful professional behaviors; leads by example.

Advisor

- Communicates the formal and informal realities of progression in the organization.
- Recommends training opportunities from which the mentee could benefit.
- Recommends appropriate strategies for career direction.
- Reviews the mentee's development plan on a regular basis.
- Helps the mentee identify resources required for career progression.
- Helps the mentee identify obstacles to career progression and take appropriate action.

Referral Agent

- Expands the mentee's network of professional contacts.
- Helps bring together different learners who may mutually benefit by helping each other.
- Helps link the mentee with appropriate educational opportunities.
- Identifies resources to help the mentee with specific problems.
- Follows up to ensure that the referred resources were useful.
- Encourages mentee to seek additional guidance and support from other "informal" mentors.

Adapted from: *Mentoring: A Practitioner's Guide*, March 1995; an essay on the mentoring program at Douglas Aircraft Company

Mentor Code of Ethics

In addition to the roles and responsibilities outlined for mentors in this manual, mentors are also expected to adhere to the following ethical guidelines:

As a mentor:

- I will meet with my mentee regularly in accordance with the expectations and instructions set forth in the Extension Mentoring Program.
- I will endeavor to listen and not lecture my mentee.
- I will help my mentee understand that I am a colleague on whom s/he can rely.
- I will serve as a positive role model for my mentee, helping him or her see the need for adherence to the expectations and responsibilities associated with being an Extension Agent.
- I will not make any promises to my mentee that I cannot keep.
- I will keep my mentee's confidence to the extent possible without violating policies, laws or ethical principles associated with Cooperative Extension and North Carolina University. I will inform my mentee as to the limitations on my ability to keep her/his confidence. If there is a reason that I need to disclose anything relating to my mentee, I will attempt to do so in a manner that is least harmful and most beneficial to my mentee and to the Extension Mentoring Program. I know that the way to address problems is to first discuss it with the person(s) involved; if not resolved, then involve the CED. If not resolved at the CED level, then talk with the appropriate DED or RPC.
- I will keep in mind my commitment to always act in the best interest of my mentee and of the Extension Mentoring Program. I will assist my mentee with attaining the knowledge and skills needed to be a responsible, productive and successful Extension Agent. I will avoid any activity that detracts from these goals.
- I will avoid any impropriety, or the appearance of any impropriety, in my relationship with my mentee and the Extension Mentoring Program.

Adapted from "Mentor Code of Ethics", www.humdevcrt.org, Milwaukee, WI.

Responsibilities of a Mentee

Following are the expectations for the mentee. It is important for you, as the mentee, to keep in mind that your mentor is a supportive colleague who has a desire to support and guide your onboarding with Cooperative Extension as well as encourage you in your professional growth and development. You, as the mentee, need to plan to devote time and energy to the relationship, just as the mentor will. Both mentee and mentor can (and should) benefit from the mentoring relationship. While you will be assigned one mentor formally, we do encourage you to seek out the advice and support of others. This will help you gain further knowledge and information to make you more successful.

In order for the pairing with your assigned mentor to be successful:

You, as the Mentee, are expected to:

- Review your mentor's biographical sketch to learn more about his or her background.
- Complete the biographical sketch located on page 31 of this desk reference guide and share it with your mentor within your first week of employment.
- Establish open and honest communication as well as a way to exchange ideas.
- Maintain confidentiality; this is essential. If something concerning the mentor or the new agent needs to be discussed with others, first discuss it within the mentoring relationship. If not resolved within the mentoring relationship, then discuss it at the next level of management which is the CED. If not resolved at the CED level, then discuss the situation with the appropriate DED or RPC.
- Understand what you want from the mentoring relationship and communicate your goals and aspirations to your mentor.
- Understand you have as much to give to the mentoring relationship as you have to receive.
- Act on the mentor's advice when it is applicable to your situation.
- Follow up with resources and references the mentor shares to find answers or needed information.
- Keep all scheduled appointments with the mentor and display professional behavior and dress, as appropriate.
- Arrange further biweekly contacts with the mentor through telephone, email or face-to-face communication.
- Be flexible on meeting times and places.
- Be realistic and maintain a positive attitude.
- Understand that you have a formal mentor that is assigned to you. You are encouraged to build a network within Cooperative Extension, so you are encouraged to seek informal mentors such as those Extension Professionals who are your office colleagues, who work in the same subject matter area as you, who are specialists, and who you can collaborate with on programs or other career-related endeavors.
- Be ambitious and enthusiastic.

Given the fact that the mentor has a full-time role within NCCE and that the purpose of the mentoring relationship is to provide guidance, new agents should AVOID within the mentoring relationship:

- Asking advice on everything; have a purpose in each request.
- Asking the mentor to tell you precisely what to do or to act in your place.
- Relying on the mentor to give or seek answers to all of your questions or requests.
- Complaining about other people or missed opportunities in an unprofessional manner.
- Committing yourself to obligations you cannot keep.
- Cancelling meetings or visits with the mentor at the last minute.

Expectations of a Mentee

A Mentee is expected to:

- Be willing to accept constructive feedback.
- Communicate regularly with their mentor.
- Act professionally.
- Exhibit flexibility.
- Demonstrate initiative.
- Notify their mentor of problems or concerns.
- Maintain confidentiality (unless as noted on page 10 in this manual).
- Express appreciation for their mentor's efforts.
- Maintain a professional relationship with the mentor and have appropriate boundaries within the mentoring relationship (i.e., not calling on mentor during non-work hours or asking personal favors of mentor).
- Plan for professional development.
- Be open to new ideas.
- Respect their mentor's time.
- Take action on the information provided by their mentor.
- Pass on the gift of mentoring to others.

Suggestions for a Successful Mentoring Visit

Face-to-face visits will result in effective communication between the mentor and the mentee. The visits will be in addition to phone/email/online contacts aimed at building rapport, fostering growth and helping the new agent with their development as a new member of North Carolina Cooperative Extension.

The following guidelines will help assure a productive and successful visit with the mentee:

- Schedule adequate time with minimal interruptions to foster a positive mentoring relationship.
- Provide directions to meeting location(s).
- Be ready and accessible for mentoring visit(s).
- Know what you want to accomplish to enhance the mentoring visit.
- Have information readily available for sharing.
- Allow time for an office tour and introduction of county staff wherever the meeting is being held.
- Plan out activities that may benefit the mentee such as:
 - Inviting the mentee to an advisory council meeting.
 - Inviting the mentee to a volunteer meeting.
 - Allowing the mentee to see the mentor conduct a program.
 - Going over program planning steps.
 - Reviewing methods and procedures for program evaluation.
 - Sharing key contacts and resources with mentee.
 - Showing mentee how to effectively use ERS.
- Allow time for the mentee to ask questions, process concerns, share experiences or explore ideas.
- Share meeting agendas in advance.
- Keep in mind that the mentor and mentee can also meet at professional organization meetings, work-related activities, etc.; think about how to be creative with the times and how you both meet.

Suggestions for First Meeting Discussion Topics

Questions for the mentee to ask the mentor:

- How long have you been working for North Carolina Cooperative Extension?
- What is your County/District and your position?
- What is one professional accomplishment that makes you especially proud?
- What is one personal accomplishment that makes you especially proud?
- What is the greatest satisfaction in your job?
- What is the greatest challenge in your job?
- What are the first three (3) things I need to do as a new NCCE employee?
- What are the top three (3) things I need to know about NCCE?

Questions for the mentor to ask the mentee:

- What would you like to be doing five years from now?
- What goals do you have for the mentoring relationship?
- What will you do to meet those goals?
- What can I, as your mentor, do to help you meet those goals?
- What is something you want to make sure to ask me today?
- How is progress going with the Field Faculty Guide and completing the different sections in it?
- Have you ever worked with Extension before (in another state or while in school)?
- What has been your previous experience with Extension; i.e., were you involved in 4-H, what did you major in while attending college, etc.?

For both the mentor and the mentee:

- What activities will you pursue this year?
- How often will you meet? (keep in mind you need to meet at least 8 times over the first year of the new hire's employment)
- On what dates will you meet?
- Who will take the initiative to see that the meetings occur? Shall you alternate taking the initiative meeting to meeting?
- What do you both hope to get out of the mentoring relationship?
- Are there professional development activities you both plan to attend where you can meet and talk?

Suggested Topics for Mentors and Their Mentee

Organizational Development

- Daily planning (calendars)
- Organizing work area
- Setting up personal files
- Handling (returning) phone calls/e-mails
- Paperwork
- Office staff relationships (with co-workers, COSS, etc.)
- Guidance and advice with completing the Field Faculty Guide

Organizational Structure

- Organizational charts for the district and county and NCCE overall
- Policies and procedures for the district, county and as a university employee
- Roles and job descriptions within the district, county and NCCE

Financial Management

- Budget management
- Spending procedures
- Grants/alternative funding
- Reimbursement process
- Accounts management
- Audits

Time Management

- Scheduling meetings and programs
- Mail, e-mail
- Office conferences
- Volunteer utilization
- Reporting (ERS)
- Deadlines
- Farm/home visits (purpose; techniques; approaches)
- How to set priorities
- Utilizing calendar and managing events/programmatic activities
- Balancing job and family

Programming

- Program techniques
- Program development process (advisory systems; impact planning and evaluation)
- Programming for special audiences (disabled, migrant, senior)
- County delivery system
- Utilizing extension specialists and other resources
- Utilizing volunteers
- Delivery methods
- Evaluation; thank you notes; reporting
- Networking with other agencies/associations/departments
- Co-sponsoring of programs with other agencies/associations/departments
- Accountability to leadership and clientele

Public Relations/Marketing

- Marketing programs and activities
- Community involvement
- Newsletters/news articles
- Relationships with co-workers
- Relationships with local media
- Relationships with volunteers
- Professional image
- Customer service
- Relationships with key leaders (county and state officials)
- Response to clients
- How to respond to sensitive situations
- Conflict resolution
- Professionalism

Professional Development

- Membership in agent associations
- Public service promotion
- Advanced degrees
- In-service trainings and educational opportunities
- Self-directed study (community workshops; continuing education classes)
- Extension Title Promotion System
- List of relevant specialists to contact

Volunteer Management/Advisory Leadership Council

- Risk management issues involving volunteers, programs and clubs
- Volunteer recruitment and management
- Delegation of tasks to volunteers
- Guidance for how to work with an Advisory Leadership Council

Resource Development

- Identifying external mentors
- External agency contacts
- Local leader identification
- Office reference materials
- Schedule a meeting with relevant specialists and develop discussion topics

Other

- Challenges of being a new agent
- The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Vision and Mission
- NCCE cultural norms

Suggested Activities for Mentors and Their Mentee

- Visit/tour the Mentor's county office
- Job shadow (accompany Mentor in daily activities)
- Assist with reports/paperwork (i.e., impact statements, staff activity reports, etc.)
- Share record keeping strategies
- Discuss "Extension" terminology
- Review resources (i.e., Extension intranet; notebooks; web resources, etc.)
- Host mentee at district/area meetings, professional association meetings
- Share knowledge between each other (i.e., prepare educational programs; "team teach"; hands-on skills)
- Attend relevant county-level meetings, events, workshops, etc.
- Promote building contacts with specialists and potential subject matter mentors
- Socialize to build positive relationship (lunch; birthday; etc.)
- Share copies of newsletters, brochures, awards programs, etc.
- Attend county advisory committee meeting
- Train how to handle difficult situations with clientele; allow mentee to listen in on speaker phone
- Make home/farm/site visits together
- Observe activities from all program areas
- Share systems for programming
- Visit with specialists

Summary of the 16 Laws of Mentoring

Adapted from *Mentoring – A Success Guide for Mentors and Protégés*
by Floyd Wickman and Terri Sjodim, McGraw Hill, 1977.

1. The Law of Positive Environment

- Create a positive environment where potential and motivation are released and options are discussed.

2. The Law of Development Character

- Nurture a positive character by helping to develop not just talent, but a wealth of mental and ethical traits.

3. The Law of Independence

- Promote autonomy; make the learner independent of you, not dependent on you.

4. The Law of Limited Responsibility

- Be responsible to them, not for them.

5. The Law of Shared Mistakes

- Share your failures as well as your successes.

6. The Law of Planned Objectives

- Prepare specific goals for your mentoring relationship.

7. The Law of Inspection

- Monitor, review, critique, and discuss potential actions. Do not just expect performance without inspection.

8. The Law of Tough Love

- The mentor acknowledges the need to encourage independence in the learner.

9. The Law of Small Successes

- Use a stepping stone process to build on accomplishments and achieve great success.

10. The Law of Direction

- It is important to teach by giving options as well as direction.

11.The Law of Risk

- A mentor should be aware that a learner's failure may reflect back upon him or her. A learner should realize that a mentor's advice will not always work.

12.The Law of Mutual Protection

- Commit to maintain privacy, protect integrity, defend character, and respect the experiences and the wisdom you have shared with each other.

13.The Law of Communication

- The mentor and the learner must balance listening with delivering information.

14.The Law of Extended Commitment

- The mentoring relationship extends beyond the typical 8-to-5 business day and/or traditional workplace role or position.

15.The Law of Life Transition

- As a mentor, when you help a learner enter the next stage of his/her life or career, you will enter the next stage of yours.

16.The Law of Fun

- Making mentoring a wonderful experience – laugh, smile and enjoy the process.

Role of the District Extension Director (DED - NC State University) or the Regional Program Coordinator (RPC – NC A&T State University)

The role of the District Extension Director (DED – NC State University) and/or the Regional Program Coordinator (RPC – NC A&T State University) is critical to the success of the mentoring relationship and to the NCCE Mentoring Program as a whole. The DED/RPC is involved in the following ways:

Matching

- Encourages agents with five (5) or more years of experience to become mentors.
- Works with the Extension Organizational Development (EOD) office to assign mentors to new agents.
- Contacts agent whom s/he thinks could be a potential mentor; confirms pairings of mentors and mentees; and asks the mentor to initiate a letter of commitment to the new agent with copies to the DED/RPC, CED and EOD (See Appendix A).

Ongoing Support

- Supports the mentoring process as it becomes a more formalized mechanism within Cooperative Extension's Onboarding process.
- Attends the training session for mentors and mentees.
- Encourages new agents to seek guidance from the mentors.
- Works with EOD in evaluating the process and facilitating requests for changes in the new agent/mentor assignments.
- If changes are made in the new agent/mentor match, DED/RPC notifies all the agents involved.
- When appropriate, works with the mentor and/or mentee to resolve any concerns or address issues that are of a confidential nature.

Evaluation

- Recognizes willingness of agents to serve as mentors and effectiveness of agents as mentors, taking this into consideration in mentor assignments with EOD and incorporating this into performance appraisal.
- Provides input to the NCCE Mentoring Committee for ongoing evaluation and improvement of the mentoring program.

Role of the County Extension Director (CED)

The role of the County Extension Director (CED) is also critical to the success of the mentoring relationship and to the NCCE Mentoring Program as a whole. The CED is involved in the following ways:

Matching

- Encourages agents with five (5) or more years of experience to become mentors.
- Provides the Extension Organizational Development (EOD) office with suggestions for who to contact about becoming a mentor.

Ongoing Support

- Follows up with the new agent by including the mentoring process as a topic for discussion on the new agent checklist (Example: “How is it going with your mentor?”; “Are you and your mentor meeting on a regular basis?”)
- Supports agents who agree to be a mentor by allowing them time to spend with their mentees, and understanding the mentor’s need to be out of the office more than usual to meet with their mentee
- Encourages new agents to seek guidance from mentors.
- Attends the training session for mentors and mentees.
- When appropriate, works with the mentor and/or mentee to resolve any concerns or address issues that are of a confidential nature.

Evaluation

- Provides input to the NCCE Mentoring Committee for ongoing evaluation and improvement of the mentoring program.
- Complete the CED Evaluation of the Extension Mentoring Program found on page 36 of this desk reference guide.
- Considers the mentor’s involvement, time and commitment to the Extension Mentoring Program when conducting the mentor’s (agent’s) annual performance evaluation. Important to note that in the Extension Performance Appraisal Tool (EPAT) on page 10, there is a section where mentoring can be noted under “Professional Development, Serving Extension and the University.” Mentoring activities can be considered under this part of the EPAT as it is important for mentors to recognize the work they are doing to encourage both the present and the future of Extension and its workforce.

Evaluation

Evaluation of the Extension Mentoring Program will take place at different intervals during the year-long mentor assignment so as to ensure a productive mentoring relationship is established and effective.

Within the first 30 days of the mentoring assignment, the Extension Organizational Development (EOD) office will check in with both the mentor and the mentee. This check in will be in the form of a phone call or an e-mail. The purpose of the check-in is to verify that initial contact has been made and progress is being experienced.

At the 3-month and 6-month marks within the year-long mentoring assignment, EOD will email a short online survey to the mentors and mentees to check on their progress and to determine if any changes are needed. EOD will work with the respective CED and DED or RPC if changes do need to be made.

Online evaluation forms for both the Mentoring Program and the Mentoring Relationship will be completed at the end of the year by both the mentor and the new agent. In addition, the CED for the mentor and the mentee will provide evaluative feedback. The purpose of these evaluations are two-fold. First, the Mentoring Committee, DEDs/RPCs and EOD want to determine the degree of success in achieving program objectives. Secondly, these groups also want to identify the areas of The NCCE Mentoring Program which might need to be changed to make it more effective and impactful. The evaluations will be reviewed by The Mentoring Committee to provide direction for future program changes.

See Appendix B for a copy of each of the Evaluation forms. These need to be submitted by both the mentee and the mentor within one (1) week of the official ending date of the mentoring relationship (i.e., within one week of the one-year anniversary of the new agent's hire date).

APPENDIX A

Sample Letter: *The following is a sample of a letter that a mentor might send to their assigned mentee as a way of initiating the mentoring relationship.*

[Put on county letterhead]

First Name, Last Name
Extension Office Address
City, NC Zip Code

Dear _____ [Mentee]:

Welcome to North Carolina Cooperative Extension (NCCE), and congratulations on your new position! I am pleased that we have been matched as mentor and mentee. This is an exciting opportunity for us to form a working relationship that will provide a positive professional and educational support system for you.

During our time together, we will examine North Carolina Cooperative Extension's philosophy, goals and values; identify resources and resource persons; and share skills, knowledge and ideas pertaining to your career in NCCE. We will also have time to discuss any concerns or questions you may have. We should plan at least six (8) face-to-face visits during your first year of employment. We should also plan to stay in regular contact at least two to four times a month by phone, e-mail or online using Skype, Zoom or Google chat.

I would like to set up our first meeting during this first month of your employment. Here are some dates and times I have available: _____
Please check your calendar and let me know if any of these dates or times work; if not, just let me know times and dates that are convenient for you.

I look forward to being your mentor and to supporting you during your first year with NCCE.

Sincerely,

Mentor
cc: CEDs; DEDs/RPCs

APPENDIX B

MENTOR/MENTEE BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The purpose of this document is to provide basic information to facilitate the development of a positive relationship. Please note that all personal information is voluntary.

NAME: _____ POSITION TITLE/RANK: _____

WORK ADDRESS: _____

WORK PHONE: _____ WORK EMAIL: _____

I chose to work in Cooperative Extension because: _____

The reason I am excited about a career in North Carolina Cooperative Extension is because:

My most valuable strengths are: _____

(Mentee only) Topics I would like to discuss with my mentor are: _____

My hobbies/leisure interests: _____

Community activities: _____

Please attach a copy of your current curriculum vitae or resume and send it to the mentor/mentee within the first week of the mentoring relationship being announced/determined.

APPENDIX C

FINAL MENTORING PROGRAM EVALUATION

Your Name: _____ County/District: _____

Dates of Mentoring Relationship: (mm/yr to mm/yr): _____

Check one: New Agent/Mentee Mentor

Briefly describe your experiences in working with the mentor/mentee and the effectiveness of the relationship: _____

Describe three or four activities that were most helpful in developing your mentoring relationship: _____

If you experienced any challenges or barriers that affected the development of the mentoring relationship, please describe those below:

How often did you and your mentor/mentee meet over the 12-month period and what formats did you use for meetings? (i.e., face-to-face, online, phone, etc.): _____

What suggestions do you have for making the mentoring program stronger: _____

Send to: Mentee's or Mentor's CED/Supervisor and to Extension Organizational Development, North Carolina State University, 209-C Patterson Hall, Box 7602, Raleigh, NC 27695.

MENTORING RELATIONSHIP EVALUATION: CED

Mentee Name: _____ Mentor Name: _____

CED's comments regarding the Mentee's progress to date:

CED's comments regarding the Mentor's effectiveness: _____

Additional comments from the CED: _____

This is to indicate that _____ (mentee) has completed the formal one-year mentoring relationship and has met the expectations of the NCCE Mentoring Program.

CED's signature

Date

This evaluation is to be completed following the mentoring process exit conference that is held between the CED and the mentee. This form, along with copies of the mentor's and mentee's Mentoring Program Evaluation forms, should be mailed to:
Extension Organizational Development, North Carolina State University, 209-C Patterson Hall, Box 7602, Raleigh, NC 27695.