



Australian Sports Turf Managers Association

# Women in Turf Strategy

MENTORING PROGRAM



Australian  
Sports Turf Managers  
Association

# CONTENTS



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Mentoring Program

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INTRODUCTION	3
PROGRAM PURPOSE	4
PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY	5
WHAT IS MENTORING?	5
BENEFITS OF MENTORING	6
PARTICIPANT RESPONSIBILITIES	7
ROLE STATEMENTS	7
ASTMA MENTORING PROGRAM FRAMEWORK	8
STAGE 1: THE FIRST MEETING	9
STAGE 2: ESTABLISHING THE RELATIONSHIP	10
STAGE 3: DEVELOPMENT & KNOWLEDGE	11
STAGE 4: CAREER DEVELOPMENT	11
STAGE 5: SUSTAINING THE RELATIONSHIP	12
EARLY MENTOR CLOSURE	13
MENTORING PROGRAM AGREEMENT (APPENDIX A)	14





## INTRODUCTION

The Australian Sports Turf Managers Association (ASTMA) Mentoring Program is organised by the Association as a key initiative from the Women In Turf Strategy announced in 2022.

The Mentoring Program was developed as a result of the need identified within the industry to implement a support network for females undertaking an apprenticeship, and to assist the career development for females currently employed within the turf management industry.

The Women In Turf Strategy identified a significant loss of female apprentices from the profession due to limited networking and support opportunities, narrow career development awareness and challenges relating to expectations of work.

The ASTMA Mentoring Program aims to retain and support young sports turf managers in undertaking their Apprenticeships and through the initial years of their career as well as providing a forum for experienced turf managers to give back to the profession.

The aim of these guidelines is to provide a framework for the basis on which mentors and mentees participate in the program. Each mentor and mentee pair will communicate, interact and achieve their mentoring program goals differently – in the way that best suits the individuals.

The program is intended to facilitate, not restrict, the participation of mentors and mentees and enable them to explore the great opportunities within the sports turf management industry.

**Mark Unwin**

Chief Executive Officer

Australian Sports Turf Managers Association



## PROGRAM PURPOSE

The Australian Sports Turf Managers Association (ASTMA) Mentoring Program is designed to provide a forum for experienced practicing turf managers, and female apprentices, students and recent graduates to develop an on-going relationship by meeting regularly and discussing matters relating to turf management, career development and personal development within an organised and supportive framework.

The intention of mentoring, is to connect an individual who has a good level of knowledge, skill and experience with an apprentice or recent graduate who has yet to develop the same level of knowledge or experience, to assist with career development and provide support through the early years of their career.

By having a mentor share advice, offer guidance and be a sounding board for emerging talent, developing turf managers can benefit through the knowledge and understanding from someone who has experienced much of what the student is/will go through early in their careers.

Having a mentor is an exceptional opportunity to aid in continued growth and both personal and professional development.

The program's purpose is not to help people find work through their mentor/mentee partnership, and the ASTMA does not advocate for job seeking or recruitment purposes through this Program, and advises participants to adhere to the program's code of conduct.

### PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY

All program participants, mentors and mentees, must be members of the Australian Sports Turf Managers Association

### MENTORS

Mentors will ideally have at least 5 years experience in the sports turf management industry. Mentors will have excellent communication skills, particularly listening, a desire to contribute to the future of the turf management profession and the time to commit to several 1 hour meetings for the duration of the program.

### MENTEES

Mentees may be apprentices, students or recent graduates of a Certificate III in Sports Turf Management (or related field) with less than 2 years of experience post graduation.

Despite the above and importantly, **any member of the ASTMA can be a mentor or mentee**. The ASTMA acknowledges that a career contains many iterations, including role changes and career breaks. To the best of our ability, we will attempt to link mentors and mentees with a suitable partner and support the principle of extended learning and knowledge sharing that underpins the Program.

Mentoring is defined as “a mutually beneficial relationship which involves a more experienced person helping a less experienced person to identify and achieve their goals”.

Mentoring relationships can be developed spontaneously or via a formally facilitated program, such as the Young Planners Mentoring Program.

Career mentoring can provide some of the most sought after attributes that employers look for: industry awareness and firsthand knowledge of the challenges of life in the workforce.

A **mentor** provides support, a sounding board, knowledge, encouragement, guidance, and constructive feedback to the mentee by developing a genuine interest in the growth of their abilities and talents.

A **mentee** actively seeks support and guidance in their career and professional development from an experienced planner. A mentee always has ultimate responsibility for their career and professional development.

The relationship is based upon encouragement, constructive feedback, openness, mutual trust, respect and a willingness to learn and share.





## BENEFITS OF MENTORING

There are many mutual benefits of participating in a mentoring program for both the mentor and mentees, including:

### MENTORS

- Contribute to the development of the future of the industry;
- Improve management, leadership and communication skills;
- Expand professional networks;
- Transfer of skills and knowledge;
- Recognition of skills, knowledge and commitment the profession;
- Reflection on projects, leadership and turf management practices;
- Personal satisfaction from making a contribution to the industry;
- Accumulate Certification (CPD) points.

### MENTEES

- Develop communication skills and knowledge;
- Build professional networks and a support system;
- Increase confidence and self-esteem;
- Discuss and learn practical issues with an experienced turf manager;
- A confidential opportunity to discuss workplace or academic issues;
- Receive support and guidance to achieve career goals;

### EMPLOYER OF MENTOR/MENTEE

- Increased productivity by both mentor and mentee;
- Improved management and technical skills;
- Discovery of emerging talent;
- Motivation of staff;
- Improved staff retention

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF MENTORS AND MENTEES

- Act ethically and with respect towards all other participants;
- Commitment to attend all prearranged meetings;
- Maintain strict confidentiality and professional boundaries;
- Discuss expectations in the first meeting and continually review.

### MENTOR'S ROLE STATEMENT:

Specific responsibilities include:

- Sign Mentoring Agreement with mentee;
- Negotiate a commitment for ongoing communication;
- Lead initial meetings with mentees;
- Assist mentee to identify needs and support career development;
- Attend information sessions or activities for mentors held by ASTMA;
- Contribute to discussion and resolution of issues raised in meetings;
- Participate in program evaluation and review.

#### The mentor may achieve these in a variety of ways by:

- Challenging assumptions and exploring new ideas and thinking;
- Being open minded and non-judgemental;
- Listening to the mentees' questions and problems;
- Assisting the mentee to identify and solve problems;
- Providing appropriate and timely advice;
- Encouraging an understanding of career options and outcomes;
- Sharing professional experiences

#### A successful and effective mentor has:

- Respect and consideration for the mentee;
- A sound level of expertise and knowledge of the industry;
- A genuine interest in the mentees' growth and development;
- A commitment to the mentoring program;
- Highly developed communication skills
- The ability to have some influence on behalf of the mentee.

### MENTEE'S ROLE STATEMENT:

Specific responsibilities include:

- Sign Mentoring Agreement with mentor;
- Negotiate a commitment for ongoing communication;
- Attend information sessions or activities for mentees held by ASTMA;
- Initiate the organisation of all meetings/ develop a meeting schedule;
- Organise an (informal or formal) agenda of discussion topics for meetings;
- Contribute to discussion and resolution of issues raised in meetings;
- Explore their own strengths and development needs.

#### The mentee may achieve their role by:

- Discussing topics taught and debated as part of their apprenticeship/studies;
- Sharing their particular interests in turf management;
- Reviewing their experiences as an emerging turf manager in the industry;
- Discussing and developing their career goals;
- Be willing to share their learnings, needs and expectations; and
- Having an open frame of mind.

#### A successful mentee will:

- Organise all meetings with their mentor;
- Commit to the mentoring program;
- Take responsibility for their own personal and professional development;
- Seek and accept constructive feedback;
- Accept new responsibilities and challenges.

Topics discussed by mentors and mentees may be a personal opinion or of a sensitive or controversial nature, therefore strict confidentiality must be maintained between mentors and mentees. By signing the Mentoring Program Agreement the *mentor* and *mentee* agree to maintain confidentiality.

# ASTMA MENTORING PROGRAM FRAMEWORK

The following program is a suggested framework for mentoring pairs to follow throughout the Mentoring Program. Participants may choose to follow part of the program or choose to create their own mentoring framework.

## STAGE 1:

### Discussing Expectations and Goals

- Mentoring Program Agreement,
- Preparation Activities

## STAGE 2:

### Establishing the Relationship

- Getting to know each other
- Career/work history
- Identify development needs

## STAGE 3:

### Development Needs / Knowledge Acquisition

- Identify opportunities to acquire knowledge
- Share and discuss a common planning topic of interest

## STAGE 4:

### Career Development

- Career direction check-up
- Review and Development of mentees CV

## STAGE 5:

### Sustaining the Relationship

- Shared Examples
- Keeping in touch





## MEETING 1

The first meeting is critical in establishing the foundations for the development of the mentorship but can be quite daunting for both the mentor and the mentee.

The key to a successful mentorship is to ensure that both participants share the same objectives and expectations of the program. These should be discussed openly and negotiated within the partnership.

### ORGANISING THE FIRST MEETING

The mentee is responsible for contacting the mentor to organise a time and place for the first (and subsequent meetings) that is suitable for both participants. It is strongly recommended that the first meeting is organised at the Mentoring Program Induction.

## DISCUSSION POINTS

### TIME COMMITMENT:

It is essential that contact be maintained throughout the mentorship. It is recommended that participants meet at least 3-4 times over the first 6 months. However, the level of time commitment needs to be discussed and negotiated between the mentor and mentee. Some partnerships may wish to meet monthly during the program or may supplement this with regular emails or phone calls.

### PREFERRED STYLE OF CONTACT:

Both the mentor and mentee need to decide whether contact during the mentorship will be formal or informal. Participants should also decide whether they want to follow the suggested program framework, discuss preprepared topics at their meetings or would prefer ad hoc discussions.

### LOCATION:

Both participants need to agree on a preferred location(s) to meet during the mentorship. Suggested locations include the mentor or mentee's office/university, a café or a park.

### GOALS:

Participants should discuss what they want to achieve through the Mentoring Program and how they will reach their goals.

### MENTORING TIP!

*Mentors may expect the mentee to do all of the contacting/organising to 'drive' the program, but mentees are often reluctant to seem too demanding.*

*To avoid this, it is best to plan for the next contact together at the end of each meeting. If either party cancels a meeting don't be disheartened and continue to reschedule.*

*Mentors are often exceptionally busy people but they are committed to the program and will endeavour to find time for their mentee.*

*If either party needs to reschedule, it is a good idea for the mentee to immediately give the mentor a list of three or four alternative times and date options to meet so the mentor can select a suitable time and location or suggest an alternative.*

### MEETING 2

This meeting should focus on the mentor and the mentee getting to know each other.

Learning each other's interests and opinions beyond planning helps build trust and understanding in the mentorship.

Topics for discussion may include

- Have you travelled extensively?
- What are your favourite hobbies?
- What personal/professional qualities do you most admire?
- How are you finding studying/school?
- What is your dream job?

Many people find it easier to start with a more informal discussion to build rapport and provide a comfortable introduction to the discussion of more serious 'planning' and career development topics.

Mentors and mentees may find that many of these discussion topics may eventually lead back to turf management topics.

Mentees should also feel comfortable asking their mentors for advice on current study topics, assignments, issues or career development.

#### **Suggested Activity**

Mentees may find it useful at this stage to ask their mentor for assistance with a particular assignment or an element of their education.

### MEETING 3

It is recommended that at the third meeting mentors provide a more in-depth discussion relating to some of their own career/work history. Initially, mentors may share their general career history, significant experiences and their career journey getting to where they are now.

However, mentors should discuss in depth a couple of anecdotes from their own experience. For example:

- The project I am most proud of is .....
- A significant career obstacle I overcame was .....
- I got into turf management because.....
- My biggest lesson was ....
- My greatest professional success or achievement is .....

Mentees can share similar information, based on their current studies, work experience and any important life experiences. Mentors should encourage discussion and reflection on what is important to the mentee and what drives them both personally and professionally.

Following on from this discussion, mentees (with assistance from their mentor) should try to determine their personal strengths and 'development needs'. Development needs are professional skills or areas of knowledge that mentees want to improve or learn more about to develop as a professional in the turf management industry.

#### **Suggested Activity**

At this point, the mentee should select three development needs that their mentor can help them work on over the coming months. Mentors and mentees should discuss ideas and opportunities for possible ways of assisting the mentee in developing their skills and knowledge based on their needs.

Potential development needs that the mentee may want to work on include:

- Report writing;
- Presentation and public speaking skills;
- Communication and Networking skills;
- Specific education-related skills such as time-management
- Technical skills such as interpreting test/sample results;
- Knowledge of current issues (e.g. biodiversity, sustainability) and concepts (e.g. drought tolerant turf, facility design);
- Workplace scenarios and politics;
- Working with peers, difficult conversations
- Leadership and Management skills
- Understanding chemical uses and research trials
- Mental Health challenges

### TWO-WAY CONVERSATIONS

- Mentors need to be wary of unknowingly dominating conversation, exerting undue influence or quickly discounting alternative opinions.
- Their role as a Mentor is to support and facilitate the mentee to take responsibility for their own problem solving and arrive at opinions independently.
- Mentors should help mentees work through all issues or alternatives to a topic and help mentees see the 'big picture', rather than offering 'the' solution.
- Playing the 'devil's advocate' is often a good way to help mentees challenge their opinions and assumptions but mentors should be careful to help mentees explore their ideas in a greater depth before presenting an alternative argument or view point.

At this stage of the mentoring relationship, mentors and mentees should focus on the development needs identified in Stage 2. This may include activities such as mentors providing advice on their mentee's education or units of study, with mentors using a 'real' project or experience to explain situations. It may be appropriate for mentees to take along examples of their work so that mentors can assist with particular development needs, such as assignments or reports.

Mentors and mentees should not feel that discussions must be limited to the mentee's development need. Specific issues and interesting discussion points naturally arise and should be explored as needed. These may include current work projects or topics in the media, specific workplace issues, events or opportunities etc.

Mentors and mentees may also wish to discuss all development needs concurrently, rather than focusing on one each meeting

### STAGE 4: CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Towards the end of the twelve-month period, mentors should focus on the career direction of the mentee. Mentees may want assistance from their mentor to clarify their preferred career direction or to develop a career plan.

It is important to evaluate an appropriate career direction based on the mentee's likes/dislikes, strengths and developments needs as well as skills, values and interests.

Partnerships may consider career opportunities, work experience, specific project experience, further study options, expanding networks or other avenues of establishing or developing a career





## STAGE 5: SUSTAINING THE RELATIONSHIP



As the mentorship develops it is important to reflect and consider successful aspects and identify areas for improvement.

Self-assessment of the participation of the mentor and mentee is important to measure the development and success of the mentorship, as well as the personal and professional development of both Mentor and Mentee.

### **An Opportunity to Review**

Mentors and mentees can consider the following questions when evaluating their participation and the development of the mentorship.

- Has the mentee/mentor attended all meetings and Mentoring Program events?
- Does the mentee/mentor have a positive approach to each meeting?
- How does the mentee/mentor respond to new ideas and suggestions?
- Has the mentee developed realistic career aspirations?
- Has the mentee/mentor completed agreed tasks?
- Is the mentee/mentor been punctual and organised?
- Has the mentee improved professionally?
- Has the mentee expanded their professional network?
- Has the mentee/mentor actively developed a level of trust with the mentor/mentee?
- Has confidentiality been maintained?
- Has progress been made towards the mentee's goals?
- Is the mentee/mentor been attentive during the meetings?
- Is the mentee/mentor comfortable with the mentorship?

There may be situations where the mentor/mentee relationship ends prematurely. The reasons for this can vary and the relationship can be ended with a “no fault” closure.

The ‘no fault closure’ can be initiated by either party and the reasons for the closure are not required.

The primary aim of the ‘no fault’ closure is to ensure a win-win situation for both parties and there is no blame attributed by or to either party. Both parties can initiate the closure and in some instances the program coordinators may be requested to facilitate the closure.

The process to end a relationship can be done either directly between the mentor and mentee or by requesting the program coordinators to facilitate it. If either the mentor or mentee chooses to close the relationship themselves it needs to be done with professionalism and respect. It is recommended that a final meeting be held to discuss the closure and the reasons behind it. The conversation should include the following:

- Start with the good – talk about the highlights and positives from the relationship;
- Communicate the reason(s) for ending the relationship – be honest and tell your mentor/mentee why you are ending the relationship. This may be difficult but it is important and shows respect to the other party;
- Give your mentor/mentee honest feedback – just because your relationship hasn’t worked out doesn’t mean they won’t be successful in another relationship.

Above all the conversation should be respectful and professional so both parties can learn from the experience and reflect on what worked and what didn’t.

Should this method be chosen it is important to contact the program coordinators to notify them of the closure of the relationship.

If either the mentor or mentee do not feel comfortable in closing the relationship the program coordinators are able to assist. The coordinators can act as the facilitator to professionally close the relationship.

In these instances the party instigating the closure should contact the coordinators as soon as the decision has been made so the relationship can be closed quickly. The coordinators will contact the other party and notify them of the closure of the relationship.

It should be noted that not all mentee and mentor relationships work out, whether it be interests, schedule or personalities it is to be expected that some relationships will need early closure.

In all cases no fault is attributed to either party and participants will be encouraged to participate in future programs.



**Please complete this agreement at your first meeting and return to:** Australian Sports Turf Managers Association – [admin@agcsa.com.au](mailto:admin@agcsa.com.au)

We \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_,  
*Mentor Name* *Mentee Name*

voluntarily commit to the Australian Sports Turf Managers Association Mentoring Program for the 12-month duration.

**We will:**

- Meet at least ..... (please provide agreed interval);
- Endeavour to attend any mentor program sessions and activities held by the ASTMA;
- Have a genuine interest and commitment in the Mentoring Program;
- Be objective, honest and supportive;
- Act ethically and with respect towards all participants;
- Respect and maintain strict confidentiality;
- Contribute to discussion and resolution of issues raised in meetings;
- Participate in the Mentoring Program evaluation and review.

We acknowledge that either person has the right to discontinue mentorship for any reason, and we will follow the Mentor Program’s closure guidelines as outlined in the Mentoring Program Handbook.

**Mentor**

**Mentee**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_