

# **Mid Atlantic Regional Archives Conference (MARAC)**

## **Mentoring Program Guidelines**

By MARAC Mentoring Subcommittee Members

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## **MARAC Mentoring Program Introduction and History**

MARAC is a volunteer, regional consortium of archivists in the Mid Atlantic region who organize, describe, preserve, and provide access to historical records in a variety of formats. As an organization, MARAC offers educational and professional opportunities and provides venues for professional and volunteer archivists to gather and share experiences with colleagues. The Mentoring Subcommittee was founded in 2018 as a subgroup of MARAC's membership committee.

The Mentoring Subcommittee decided to create a formal mentoring program based off of a similar program created by the New England Archivists (NEA) in 2013. The NEA program followed a mentoring cohort model that was designed to “generate an environment where a diverse group of experiences will be shared in order for participants to learn from one another and push the archival discipline forward... [and that] cohorts will encourage more mentoring cohorts, which will help ensure professional and personal growth opportunities for all NEA members.” A mentoring cohort is a group of individuals that meet (virtually or in person) on a regular basis for an agreed amount of time during the mentorship period.

Mentoring cohorts are models that help both senior and junior members of the MARAC community meet professional goals by networking, developing needed skills, and receiving support and guidance. This type of mentoring, where one or two senior mentors meet with a small group of mentees, was well received among NEA members and is not a model currently offered through most other archival professional associations.

These MARAC Mentoring Program Guidelines are intended to set expectations of participation and support for both mentors and mentees. MARAC does not provide specific guidance on what the mentoring cohorts will do or discuss. These guidelines will provide direction for the mentoring cohorts overall, as well as ideas and resources for a successful experience of group mentoring.

## **Description of Mentoring and Peer Cohorts in the MARAC Mentoring Program**

A cohort is a group of professional colleagues who meet together on a regular basis for an agreed upon length of time. Participants may act as mentors, mentees, or peers.

The group serves to support mentees and peers in:

1. Setting important career and personal development goals.
2. Building confidence to reach those goals.
3. Fostering connections with people in their professional field.

4. Building a network of peer support with other professionals.

The group serves to support mentors in:

1. Expanding their professional network.
2. Gaining a fresh perspective from someone newer in the field.
3. “Paying it forward” professionally.
  
4. Developing their leadership and group facilitation skills.

The cohort serves to facilitate the exchange of experiences, challenges, and opportunities for the purpose of enhancing perspective, self-confidence, communication skills, and leadership. Each cohort is assigned to a mentoring subcommittee liaison to assist the cohort with meeting its goals.

### **Mentoring cohorts**

Cohorts foster multiple mentoring relationships both between the mentors and the mentees, as well as the peer mentoring relationships among the mentees and mentors themselves. Cohorts will typically consist of four to six mentees and two mentors (or six to eight peers). Cohorts are matched based on a variety of factors, including interests, geography, and availability. Cohorts are matched following an initial application period.

In the first meeting, members will spend some time:

- Getting to know each other,
- Setting mutual expectations,
- Discussing goals
- Planning the logistics of their cohort.

Cohorts will meet for one to two hours, once a month for the duration of the program.

### **Expectations for Mentors**

Mentors are identified through the application process but are selected based on their interest and support of mentoring those individuals early to the profession.

Mentors are responsible for:

- Communicating appropriately and in a timely manner with mentees and co-mentors

- Coming prepared to each meeting (for example, with discussion ideas identified or readings completed, and to share their experiences or provide feedback during the discussion)
- Facilitating the group's discussion and activities
- Fostering participation of all mentees as appropriate
- Helping to set expectations for the group
- Helping to create an welcoming, respectful environment for all cohort members
- Sharing their personal experiences and perspectives with their cohort
- Communicating with MARAC Mentoring Subcommittee liaisons as appropriate

Mentors and mentees should have open lines of communication and are encouraged to work together outside the group as questions arise.

Because most cohorts have two mentors assigned to them, we encourage co-mentors to connect prior to their cohorts starting in order to get to know each other, discuss personal facilitation styles, and expectations. Mentors should consider their co-mentor as a partner in this endeavor, a resource, and even a peer mentor throughout their time together leading a cohort. For example, co-mentors might discuss together the topics that their cohort will discuss throughout the program, how to encourage a quiet member to participate, or even their own career challenges. The MARAC Mentoring Subcommittee will also host a mentor orientation prior to the start of the first cohort meeting.

### **Expectations for Mentees/Peers**

Mentees join the cohort prepared to contribute and learn from everyone, with the understanding that mentoring is a self-directed process. Mentees take responsibility for setting personal goals, crafting their own agendas for discussion in the group, and sharing those ideas with their mentors and fellow mentees.

Mentees are responsible for:

- Attending as many meetings as possible
- Coming prepared to each meeting (for example, with discussion ideas identified or readings completed, and to share their experiences or provide feedback during the discussion)
- Helping in scheduling meetings and supporting the coordination of logistics for each meeting
- Helping to create an welcoming, respectful environment for all cohort members
- Communicating with mentors or liaisons for assistance or concerns with the cohort

## **Expectations for Liaisons**

Liaisons are volunteers from the MARAC Mentoring Subcommittee who take on support roles in their assigned cohorts.

Liaisons are responsible for:

- Communicating with cohort mentors and mentees in a timely manner
- Providing program information to participants
- Keeping the Subcommittee members up-to-date on cohort activities
- Assisting mentors with scheduling their first cohort meeting
- Acting as a respectful ear and/or mediating when issues or concerns arise within a cohort
- Liaisons may help mentors brainstorm discussions and activities as requested
- Sending the mid-year and end-of-cohort surveys to cohort members
- Facilitating a mentor orientation session prior to the first cohort meeting
- Facilitating the initial cohort meeting

## **Program Timeline**

- ❖ Early May: Open applications for NEW cohort & send e-mail
- ❖ May 31: Official end of current cohort
- ❖ June 1: Committee turns over
- ❖ June 15: Applications for NEW cohort due
- ❖ Mid-June - mid-July: Matching
- ❖ Late July - early August: Co-mentor orientation
- ❖ Mid-Late August: First cohort meeting
- ❖ Late October: Initial check-in (check to see everything is well)
- ❖ Mid-December: Send midpoint survey to current cohort
- ❖ Early May: Liaisons attend final meeting and send end-of-cohort survey

## **Scheduling Meetings**

Cohorts typically meet for one to two hours per month for the length of the program. Meetings should be scheduled based on the best available time for all participants. Scheduling meetings is up to the discretion of each cohort and may be in-person or virtual, depending on each cohort's preferences.

The liaison will schedule the cohort's first meeting. Logistics of future meetings will be determined at this initial meeting.

## **Attendance Policy**

Mentoring relationships develop over time and you should consider regular participation as the foundation by which these relationships are fostered.

We ask that all participants prioritize cohort meetings and miss no more than two meetings throughout the duration of this program. Attendance at the first meeting is highly encouraged, as this sets scheduling for the remainder of the cohort. Should missing a meeting be necessary, please be in touch with your cohort mentors or peers in advance.

## **First Meeting Suggestions**

During the first meeting, cohorts will conduct introductions, review these guidelines, establish goals, and set mutual expectations for the remaining cohort meetings. The cohort liaison will coordinate and facilitate this first meeting. Cohorts may focus on determining the following:

- Introductions of mentors and mentees
  - Aspirations, goals, and interests
  - Include past positions and previous mentoring experiences
  - Motivation to join the profession
- Expectations and Roles
  - Participation and confidentiality
  - Support of the mentoring cohort in meeting goals
- Discussion of Scheduling
  - Brainstorm on ways to schedule meetings moving forward
  - Decide when and where future meetings will be held
  - Determine who is responsible for the logistics of future meetings

## **Expectations for Discussions**

Cohort conversations will vary based on each group's interests, goals, and needs. Cohort conversations should be kept private within the group. Cohort environments should be mutually supportive and abide by the [MARAC Code of Conduct](#). All participants should be willing to give and receive professional and personal support from all other cohort members.

Cohorts will determine topics of discussion and potential resources based on their group's interests, goals, and needs. Cohorts may or may not create a formal agenda for each discussion, based on the expectations set at their initial meeting. Cohort topics for discussion may evolve over the cohort cycle as interests and needs evolve. Possible topics for discussion include:

- ❖ Career planning/setting personal goals
- ❖ Career skills development
- ❖ Challenges faced during work
- ❖ Defining what success means to you
- ❖ Getting published as an archivist
- ❖ Hiring: how to manage being on a job committee
- ❖ Identifying individual strengths and weaknesses
- ❖ Learning how to promote yourself
- ❖ Learning to network
- ❖ Managing up, down, and sideways
- ❖ Negotiation skills
- ❖ Professional development
- ❖ Professional service and leadership
- ❖ Promotions
- ❖ Sharing lessons learned in the workplace
- ❖ Time management
- ❖ Updates from the group
- ❖ What you hope to gain from the mentoring cohort
- ❖ Work/life balance

### **Strategies for Success in Group Mentoring**

The MARAC Mentoring Program aims to provide support and guidance for every member of the group.

A successful mentoring group will:

- Connect members to people and/or resources that can contribute to the group objectives, network and collaborate with group members and/or their colleagues/friends
- Define and agree upon availability
- Develop professional skills
- Encourage self-reflection
- Establish group norms when the cohort first meets
- Focus on learning (and teaching)
- Foster development of trust, understanding, confidentiality, and empathy with fellow group members
- Provide constructive feedback
- Set clear goals, needs, and expectations

Participants in a successful mentoring group will:

- Be approachable and accessible
- Be at ease with one another
- Be honest with one another

- Be patient and kind
- Be willing to ask for and seek help/advice
- Build and maintain relationships
- Establish and maintain good communication
- Listen to one another with an open mind and be nonjudgmental
- Promote and encourage each other
- Stay in touch and respond to one another in a timely manner

Should concerns arise over the cohort cycle, participants should not hesitate to reach out to Cohort liaisons to express their concerns. We are here for you!

### **Inclusive Meeting Resources**

<https://edib.harvard.edu/inclusive-meeting-guide>

### **References**

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