

Mid Atlantic Regional Archives Conference (MARAC)

Mentoring Program Guidelines

By MARAC Mentoring Subcommittee

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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 and may also choose to join a BIPOC cohort, which is designed to provide a unique, safe space for members of the BIPOC community to support each other.

The program 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 program 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 typically consist of four mentees and two mentors, or four to six peers. After an initial application period, cohorts are matched based on a variety of factors that include professional interests, geography, and availability.

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 typically meet for one to two hours per month for the length of the program.

Expectations for Mentors

Mentors are responsible for:

- Communicating appropriately, and in a timely manner, with mentees and co-mentors
- Coming prepared to each meeting (e.g., with discussion ideas identified or readings completed, ready 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 a 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 the start of the program in order to get to know each other and discuss personal facilitation styles and expectations. Co-mentors should consider themselves partners, resources, and peers as they lead their cohort together. For example, co-mentors might discuss topics to bring up with their cohort, methods 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 and peers join their cohort prepared to contribute and learn from everyone, with the understanding that mentoring is a self-directed process. Mentees and peers 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 and peers are responsible for:

- Attending as many meetings as possible
- Coming prepared to each meeting (e.g., with discussion ideas identified or readings completed, ready 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 a 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
- ❖ May 31: Official end of current cohort
- ❖ June 1: Mentoring Subcommittee turns over
- ❖ June 15: Applications for NEW cohort due
- ❖ Mid-June - mid-July: Cohort matching
- ❖ Late July - early August: Mentor orientation
- ❖ Mid-Late August: First cohort meeting
- ❖ Late October: Initial check-in by liaisons
- ❖ Mid-December: Liaisons send midpoint survey
- ❖ Mid-May: Liaisons 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.

Liaisons will schedule each cohort's first meeting and logistics of future meetings will be determined at this initial meeting.

Attendance Policy

Mentoring relationships develop over time and participants 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 the following:

- Introductions of mentors and mentees
 - Aspirations, goals, and interests
 - Past positions and previous mentoring experiences
 - Motivations to join the profession
- Expectations and Roles
 - Participation and confidentiality
 - Support of the mentoring cohort in meeting goals
- Discussion of Scheduling
 - Brainstorm 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:

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

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
- Define and agree upon availability
- Develop professional skills
- Encourage self-reflection
- Establish group norms at the initial meeting
- 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 honest, patient, and kind with one another
- 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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