

**Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference (MARAC) Mentoring Program
Guidelines**

By MARAC Mentoring Subcommittee (2018-2020)

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A note of thanks to NEA

The MARAC Mentoring Program and all of our current documentation is modelled on that of the New England Archivists Association (NEA), and we are indebted to the assistance of Matthew Gorham for sharing his advice and experience during our implementation.

MARAC MENTORING PROGRAM INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY

On June 23, 1972, a meeting organized by Mary Boccaccio, Frank Evans, and Elsie Freivogel was held in the Katherine Anne Porter Room of McKeldin Library at the College Park campus of the University of Maryland. It attracted thirty-three archivists; on the agenda was the possible formation of what eventually became MARAC -- the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference. By the end of 1972 the organization had held its first semi-annual meeting in Wilmington, Delaware, attracting one hundred and fifty archivists and manuscript curators. Within three years the Conference had held six meetings in five different states throughout the mid-Atlantic region -- from Newark, New Jersey to Charlottesville, Virginia.

MARAC's beginnings paralleled archival developments in other areas of the United States during the early 1970s: six regional organizations, including the New England Archivists, the Midwest Archives Conference, the Northwest Archivists, and the Society of Southwest Archivists were also formed in 1972. MARAC sought to attract members from the states of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia.

The initial purposes of the group were to plan practical action-oriented conferences and workshops and to seek additional means of increasing professional competence, preserving local historical resources, and promoting cooperation with colleagues in related fields. Semi-annual meetings have continued to be a major focus of MARAC's activities. These meetings have offered a wide range of workshops and tours designed to appeal to a broad cross-section of the membership--from beginning archivists to experienced professionals and staff from both small and large repositories.

A mentoring program for MARAC was first proposed by Vincent Novara during his term as Chair-Elect for MARAC at the April 20, 2017 meeting of the Steering Committee. During the subsequent academic year, the Membership Committee was charged to investigate the requirements for instituting a program, as well as to evaluate programs offered by peer organizations. Sara Borden, then Chair of the Membership Committee, identified the program offered by the New England Archivists (NEA) Association as a potential model. Our colleagues in NEA generously shared their resources and time, and consequently MARAC's program is based on their concept and structure, with slight modifications to meet the needs of our members.

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 GROUP MENTORING/ MENTORING COHORTS IN THE MARAC MENTORING PROGRAM

Definition and Goals

A mentoring 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 or mentees.

The group serves to support mentees in:

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

The group serves to support mentors in:

1. Expansion of a professional network. 2. Gaining a fresh perspective from someone newer in the field. 3. “Paying it forward” professionally.

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

Mentoring Cohorts

Mentoring 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 up to two mentors. Both mentors and mentees are matched to a cohort depending on their interests and goals. The application process and an initial survey will help determine everyone’s interests and support the initial matching. In the first few meetings, members are likely to spend some time getting to know each other, as well as discussing their goals and how they could be accomplished. The aim is to meet for 1-2 hours bimonthly (usually totally six times per cycle) for the length 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 seeking to be mentored. They are asked to lead the group’s discussion and activities, and to share their personal experiences and perspectives with their cohort.

Mentors are responsible for facilitating the conversations, driving discussion, fostering participation of all mentees as appropriate and setting expectations for the group. The mentor and mentee should have open lines of communication and are encouraged to work together outside of the group as questions arise. Mentors are also expected to communicate with the liaisons of the MARAC Mentoring Program in scheduling meetings, for logistical or other arrangements, or when issues or concerns cannot be resolved within the group.

Because there are two mentors assigned to each cohort, 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.

Expectations for Mentees

Mentees join the cohort prepared to contribute as much as they hope to gain from the cohort, 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. They are expected to come to the group prepared, with discussion ideas identified or readings completed, and to share their experiences or provide feedback during the discussion. Mentees can also help in scheduling meetings and supporting the coordination of logistics for meeting.

If difficulties arise, reach out to the mentors or your cohort's liaison for help. They can help with concerns about the group, and provide guidance on how to move forward in a constructive way.

Expectations for Liaisons

Liaisons are volunteers from the MARAC Mentoring Subcommittee who take on support roles in their assigned cohorts. Liaisons provide program information to participants and keep the Subcommittee up-to-date on cohort activities. They also assist mentors with logistical tasks, including scheduling meetings (Doodle polls are helpful) and act as mediators when issues or concerns arise within a cohort. Liaisons may help mentors brainstorm discussions and activities as requested.

Program Timeline: July - June

Depending on the aim and needs of the cohort they may meet more or less frequently.

Scheduling Meetings

Cohorts typically meet for 1-2 hours bimonthly (usually totally six times per cycle) from July through June. Depending on the needs of the cohorts, these meetings are traditionally scheduled on evenings during the week and do not take place during work hours due to the different scheduling needs of mentees.

The cohort's first meeting will be scheduled by the cohort's liaison. After the first meeting is scheduled, mentors and mentees will be assigned the responsibility of scheduling all future meetings and determining where those meetings will take place. This can be done in a number of ways and it is up to the cohort participants to come up with a plan on how to schedule meetings and to report to the liaison about their decision.

Participation

The MARAC Mentoring Program was envisioned with the full participation of mentors and mentees in mind. Mentoring relationships develop over time and you should consider regular participation as the foundation by which these relationships are fostered. Meetings canceled for inclement weather may be rescheduled if the cohort works together to find a new date. There may be times when rescheduling a canceled meeting is not a possibility. With an understanding that the best intentions for full

participation can be impeded by unforeseen events each cohort should, at the first meeting, discuss strategies to allow for flexible participation if a cohort member is unable to attend a meeting. This may involve those who will miss a meeting providing an update or other information pertinent to the discussion in advance, providing meeting minutes and encouraging discussions by all cohort members using shared online platforms such as Google Drive.

Mentees:

We ask that mentees prioritize your mentoring meetings, and try to miss no more than one meeting throughout the duration of the program. Barring an emergency, the first meeting is mandatory. Should missing a meeting be necessary, please be in touch with your cohort liaison and mentors in advance. We would like you to be mindful that there are limited spots in the MARAC Mentoring Program for mentees.

Mentors:

Like mentees, we ask that you prioritize your participation in mentoring meetings, and try to miss no more than one meeting throughout the duration of this program. Barring an emergency, the first meeting is mandatory. Should missing a meeting be necessary, please be in touch with your cohort liaison and co-mentor in advance.

First Meeting Suggestions

- Expectations and Roles
 - participation and confidentiality
 - support of the mentoring cohort in meeting goals
- Introductions of Mentors and Mentees
 - include past positions
 - motivation to join the profession
 - aspirations, goals, and interests
- Discussion of Scheduling
 - brainstorm on ways to schedule meetings moving forward
 - brainstorm strategies and methods to support participation outside of regularly scheduled meetings as needed to support full participation
 - decide when and where future meetings will be held
 - determine who is responsible for the logistics of future meetings and reporting these meetings to the liaison

Expectations for Discussions

The mentoring cohort's conversations will vary based on each group's dynamic but the focus should be on career growth, facing challenges, and solving problems. These conversations should be kept private and should be in a supportive environment. The group will work with your cohort's liaison to coordinate the schedule, and though they may provide you with ideas and articles to help start your initial conversation, they

expect that the mentors and mentees will set and drive the discussions themselves. All participants should be willing to give and get professional and personal support from the other members of the cohort.

The group provides accountability to each other and should be a confidential environment. Mentors will help guide, and promote productive discussions in the cohort to ensure all members of the group have an opportunity to participate.

Discussion Resource:

Chandler DE, Hall DT, Kram KE. How to be a Smart Protégé: Eight tips for setting up a network of mentors. August 7, 2009.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203937504574252141852898888.html>.

Possible Themes for Discussion

- Updates from the group
- Career skills development
- Challenges faced during work
- Learning to network
- Career planning / setting personal goals
- Negotiation skills
- Promotions / Tenure
- Professional development
- Professional service and leadership
- Defining what success means to you
- Managing up, down, and sideways
- Time management
- Work/life balance
- Identifying individual strengths and weaknesses
- Sharing lessons learned in the workplace
- What you hope to gain from participating in the Mentoring Cohort
- Hiring: how to manage being on your first job search committee
- Learning how to promote yourself
- Advocacy strategies and techniques

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS IN GROUP MENTORING

Group mentoring should provide personal and professional support and guidance, as well as self-reflection and satisfaction, for every member of the group. The most important component of success in this setting is to establish from the first meeting a firm commitment, a willingness to invest time and energy, and clarity about the expectations. This should be done by the cohort's mentors and agreed upon by mentees.

As the cycle progresses, the challenges are to maintain contact and use meeting time efficiently and productively, as well as to ensure that all participants are participating fully. A mentoring group develops over time, as relationships take time to establish.

A successful mentoring group will:

- Establish group norms when the cohort first meets
- Set clear goals, needs, and expectations
- Define and agree upon availability
- Focus on learning (and teaching)
- 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
- Develop professional skills
- Provide constructive feedback
- Encourage self-reflection
- Foster development of trust, understanding, confidentiality, and empathy with fellow group members

Participants in a successful mentoring group will:

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

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Chandler DE, Hall DT, Kram KE. How to be a Smart Protégé: Eight tips for setting up a network of mentors. August 7, 2009.

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