DairySage Program Handbook
Mentoring for the Dairy Industry
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Acknowledgement

DairySage Mentoring was originally developed by WestVic Dairy and The People in Dairy team from Dairy Australia with funding provided by the Geoffrey Gardiner Dairy Foundation. The project has been adapted and improved over time and is funded through the Young Dairy Network Australia.
Welcome

The aim of DairySage Mentoring is to support the mentee to develop their skills and personal capability enabling them to reach their own goals and objectives. DairySage does this through a six month structured program partnering experienced, inspirational and dynamic mentors with individuals from all sectors of the dairy industry.

Mentoring provides a supportive and private relationship between two people that involves sharing and developing knowledge. Mentees benefit from having a sounding board for concepts, will gain confidence in communicating and will establish wider networks within the industry through their mentor.

Mentors gain from mentoring through personal development (enhanced listening skills, higher empathy, etc.), a strong connection to the younger generation, enlarged networks and community recognition.

The project includes the tools and processes to train and support both parties in effective mentoring partnerships.

What is Mentoring?

"Mentoring supports and encourages people to manage their own learning in order that they may maximise their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be." — Eric Parsloe

Mentoring is one of the oldest forms of human development and empowerment and today the concept of mentoring is used all over the world in large corporations, small business, universities and youth development. It is an effective way of helping people to progress in their careers and is becoming increasingly popular. It is a helpful relationship based upon mutual trust and respect.

A mentor is a guide who can help the mentee to find the right direction and who can help them to develop solutions to career issues. Mentors rely upon having had similar experiences to gain an empathy with the mentee and an understanding of their issues. Mentoring provides the mentee with an opportunity to think about career options and progress.

For individuals keen to build their confidence, develop personal or professional skills, mentoring is an excellent opportunity in a non-threatening, one-on-one environment. There are no limits - mentoring can be used for many situations: to navigate a business through a difficult situation, a tool in a wealth strategy, to grow the farm business, to determine life or business goals or advance a career.
Program Overview

Relationships will be more likely to succeed if participants understand roles, responsibilities, skills and approaches towards effective mentoring. The following information outlines the activities for participants and the expectations around the commitment required to complete the program.

As participation in the program is voluntary and unpaid, we expect mentees and mentors to respect and appreciate the contribution each makes.

The initial workshop runs over 2 days for mentee participants and 1.5 days for mentors.

Participants will learn:

- mentoring skills and how to make the most from mentoring partnerships,
- undertake professional development training in areas such as; goal setting, communication skills and learning styles.

During the training program, mentors and mentees work together with the aim of implementing a personal development plan for the mentee.

Partnerships will be supported by a ‘mentoring manual’ written specifically for the dairy industry which includes the training notes and also suggestions for partnership activities, how to communicate and how often and tips for constructive reflection through giving and receiving feedback.

Throughout the six months following the workshop, participants will stay connected through a series of webinars each month. Further details will be provided during the workshop. To get the most of the program attending the webinars is required.

Mentees are expected to assume the responsibility of maintaining contact with your mentor throughout the six months. Mentors are involved in the program because they want to help develop your skills and understandings and assist with your career development. It is important that all interaction between mentee and mentor result in useful dialogue and outcomes. Be prepared to commit at least one day a month to your project until the completion of the program. You can of course connect with your mentor as often as possible.

At the conclusion of the six months, the group will reconvene for a final event to discuss and share the outcomes of each mentees experience.

An evaluation on the effectiveness of mentoring is important to improve and ensure success of the program.

This evaluation will include:

- Mentor and mentee self-evaluation of their role in the program, success of the relationship, and overall value to them
- The overall success rate of mentoring partnerships.
- Follow up evaluation six months after the conclusion of the program.
More information for mentees

This program has been designed to develop your career by building your understanding of yourself and others, your technical knowledge, the dairy industry and farming systems through undertaking a project during the DairySage Program. Be prepared to commit at least one day every month, until completion of the program.

As a mentee, you assume the responsibility for maintaining contact with your mentor. Mentors are involved in the program because they want to develop your understanding of farming and assist your early career development. They can even help you to establish connections in the industry. Prepare for the time you will spend with your mentor to ensure time spent is beneficial and will result in positive outcomes.

You will first meet your mentor at the workshop. After a round of speed dating and networking, you will have the opportunity to identify who within the group you believe can guide you through the program and your project.

After the workshop, you will take charge of maintaining the relationship. How you communicate (in person, by phone or email) and the frequency must be agreed between you and your mentor.

Be realistic regarding availability of your mentor, and be flexible for meeting times. Many mentors are farmers as well and experience the intensive bursts of activity that dairy farming involves. Be understanding of their needs and offer alternative solutions. If you do have an on farm meeting, you may even want to offer a hand while there.

Mentors are volunteering their valuable time and you can further help the relationship by:

- Being prepared (including a list of discussion topics) and on time for visits
- Having realistic expectations
- Initiating contact and following through with commitment
- Keeping a record of discussions (mentor link)
- Respecting the confidentiality of discussions

In addition to regular meetings, be proactive in identifying opportunities for your mentor to catch-up. This may involve attending regional farm walks and events together or even industry conferences.

Attending the monthly webinars is an essential part of the program and assist greatly in helping you to both stay on track and prepare for the final event where all mentees present their experiences from the program.
More information for mentors

Mentors are selected due to their expertise and passion for the dairy industry. It is expected that your mentee will engage with you regularly (at least monthly) and may visit you at your farm or work place during the program.

The mentor’s role is to listen, provide constructive feedback and to help their mentoring partner consider options. They may refer them to resources and facilitate decision making and share their own experiences. They might help to identify areas for development, provide coaching and allow opportunities to practice their new skills. They may be a sounding board, ask questions to cause further exploration of ideas or to challenge their mentees thinking. They provide guidance, not direction and do not solve problems but act as a collaborator in the problem solving process.

Responsibilities of the mentor include:

- Maintaining confidentiality
- Being accessible
- Listening actively
- Motivating and supporting your mentoring partner to achieve their goals

Your mentee will already be familiar with, and have had some exposure to the industry. Identify their experience, and pitch discussions at a level that suits their understanding. Where mentees are highly familiar with dairying, e.g. those that have grown up and/or worked on dairy farms, challenge their thinking and perceptions. As each dairy farm is unique, the insights into your operation or business will further their understanding of the diversity of the industry.

As a mentor, you will become a confidential source of advice, support, and guidance for the mentee as they develop their understandings. Adhere to the motto that ‘the only stupid question is the one not asked’; encourage them to question everything, and take the time to answer them fully.
Suggested activities

• Chats by phone; a good option to discuss ‘one-off’ topics and keep communications ‘alive’. Consider also options that have video:
  o Skype
  o Facetime
  o Facebook Messenger.
• Catch-up for coffee or lunch
• Farm visits
• Industry events, workshops/conferences
• Sharing of web sites, articles and publications, Facebook links
• Invitations to discussion forums on particular topics.

Methods to enhance interactions

• Listen intently
• Be responsive to communications e.g. respond to emails/voice messages in a timely manner
• Use open ended questions to encourage thinking and dialogue (e.g. ask “What will you be doing in the coming months to prepare for calving?”, not “Are you preparing for calving now?”)
• Think from your mentoring partners perspective
• Be complimentary and encouraging
• Be honest and respectful
• Take a personal interest
• Provide strategic comment and discussion
• Apply your background knowledge and networks to their situation
# Workshop Program – Day 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session/Activity</th>
<th>Mentors</th>
<th>Mentee participants</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>8.30am</strong></td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td>– Welcome &amp; introductions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– About the project and how the</td>
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<td>mentoring program works</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Your expectations</td>
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<td>– Ground rules</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>10.30am</strong></td>
<td><strong>Chances, choice and change</strong></td>
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<td>– Chances – seizing opportunities</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Choices – deciding what I want</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>– Change – unfreeze, change, refreeze</td>
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<td><strong>12.00–12.40pm</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lunch</strong> (opportunity to meet mentors)**</td>
<td></td>
<td>– Welcome and Introductions</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– About the project</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– How the mentoring program works</td>
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<td>– What is mentoring</td>
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<td>– Benefits of mentoring</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>– Roles and responsibilities</td>
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<td>– Mentoring process</td>
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<td>– Mentoring skills</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>– Building mentoring relationships</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>– Structuring a Mentoring session</td>
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<td></td>
<td>– Prepare for meeting the mentees</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3.30–3.50pm</strong></td>
<td><strong>Afternoon tea</strong></td>
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<td>– Team activity</td>
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<td><strong>5.00pm</strong></td>
<td><strong>Session end (free time)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>6.00pm</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mentors and mentee pre-dinner drinks</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6.30pm</strong></td>
<td><strong>Dinner</strong></td>
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# Workshop Program – Day 2

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.00am</td>
<td>Session 7</td>
<td>- Review of Day 1&lt;br&gt;- Building mentor relationships&lt;br&gt;- Roles and responsibilities&lt;br&gt;- Choosing a Mentor</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.30am</td>
<td>Morning tea</td>
<td>- Understanding individual differences&lt;br&gt;- Effective communication&lt;br&gt;- Communication preferences&lt;br&gt;- Listening skills&lt;br&gt;- Open &amp; closed questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.30am</td>
<td>Session 8</td>
<td>Working together continued&lt;br&gt;- Understanding individual differences&lt;br&gt;- Effective communication&lt;br&gt;- Communication preferences&lt;br&gt;- Listening skills&lt;br&gt;- Open &amp; closed questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.15 – 1.00pm</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Session 9&lt;br&gt;- Mentor &amp; Mentee working together&lt;br&gt;- Review AIM&lt;br&gt;- Develop AIM Action plan&lt;br&gt;- Tools to help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.30pm</td>
<td>Participants depart</td>
<td>Session 10&lt;br&gt;- Follow up post workshop&lt;br&gt;- Mentoring templates&lt;br&gt;- Mentor Agreement&lt;br&gt;- Coordinate schedule</td>
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<td>Session 11&lt;br&gt;- Review&lt;br&gt;- Evaluation&lt;br&gt;- Presentations</td>
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The program is subject to change if required.
Conclusion of mentoring

The formal program is six months in length and mentoring will cease at the end of program. Mentors and mentees are welcome to stay in touch with each other beyond this date if they choose to.

The mentor or mentee can contact the program manager to invoke a confidential ‘no-fault exit’ if the relationship is not working, or if other factors prevent the continuance of the mentoring. The other party will be informed that the partnership has ended, but not the specifics why (unless authorised to do so).

Further information

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