The ICER 2015 E-Mentoring Programme Overview

The ICER WIE Mentoring Information Pack comprises this Overview document and the accompanying Application Forms.

Introduction

In October 2013, the International Confederation of Energy Regulators (ICER) launched its ICER's Women in Energy (WIE) initiative. Its objective is to aid the career advancement of women in energy. We do this by offering practical tools to help women help themselves in their career paths and by seeking to change culture and attitudes. ICER's Women in Energy vision is for women to have equal opportunities, be empowered and have the self-confidence to succeed.

One practical tool is the **ICER e-mentoring programme** which is **open to staff of ICER's energy regulatory authorities**. A 12-month pilot programme was run in 2014 attracting 38 female mentees and 34 mentors (11 male and 23 female). Feedback from participants of the pilot scheme is very positive. A wide range of benefits were identified including for example an appreciation of opportunities and practices in other regions. Almost all of the respondents said the programme had a positive impact upon them. All mentees and 92% of mentors who responded to our feedback questionnaire stated they would participate in the programme again.

2015 E-Mentoring Programme

Based on the success of the (2014) pilot programme, a new (and improved) round of the mentoring programme has been launched for 2015. **Female mentees, and both male and female mentors** are invited to join the programme. The deadline for applications is **20 November 2014**. The programme runs for the calendar year, January – December 2015, allowing participants the full benefit of a 12-month mentoring relationship.

This programme is referenced as an "e-mentoring" programme because of the unique pairing of mentors and female mentees from energy regulatory authorities all over the globe. The geographic diversity alone will prove to be both exciting and challenging during the programme. ICER, therefore, encourages mentees and mentors to connect and engage using technology and social media tools to aid in the development of a robust mentorship relationship.

Timelines for the 2015 Mentoring Programme

Programme launch:	October 15, 2014
Deadline for Applications for mentors and mentees:	November 20, 2014
Notification of with whom you are paired	December 31, 2014
Webinar 1 (Introduction to ICER E-Mentoring: Mentoring Relationships and Experiences):	January, 2015 (date tbc)
Initial check that pairings are working	March 2015
Webinar 2 (*What We Have Learned as Mentor and Mentee)*: June, 2015 (date tbc)	
Mid-Programme assessment	August 2015
Programme End and final programme assessment:	December 31, 2015

Participants are required to complete a short questionnaire mid-way through and again at the end of the programme. This will help ICER assess whether the programme is meeting participants expectations and ICER's women in energy goals, and help improve the programme going forward.

Visit the ICER website for testimonials from the pilot (2014) mentoring programme and to learn more about the 2015 programme.
http://www.icer-regulators.net/portal/page/portal/ICER_HOME/WIE/Activities/Mentoring

Guide to Mentoring

What is a mentor?

A mentor acts as a guide, to help you define, understand and pursue your goals. Mentoring is a vehicle for learning, but the mentor is neither a teacher nor a coach.

Mentoring used to occur when an older, more experienced person passed on their wisdom to a younger and less experienced person, but these days mentoring relationships are often more reciprocal in nature. Mentoring relationships in the 21st century tend to be partnerships, where both parties work collaboratively on achieving mutually defined goals.

A mentor is someone with whom you may:

- Discuss your career aspirations;
- Formulate goals and plans;
- Explore options for your ongoing development;
- Talk about workplace issues and problems; and
- Test ideas and obtain feedback on possible strategies.

What are the Key Features of a Successful Mentoring Relationship?

Reciprocity

Both parties can gain from a mentoring relationship. Mentors gain access to fresh perspectives and broadening their network in a different sphere, better knowledge of the experience of people at lower levels, as well as the opportunity to develop their coaching and counseling skills. Mentees gain a source of feedback and information and a sounding board to assist them to identify and pursue career goals.

Focus on development

The mentoring relationship has a prospective focus. It involves discussions about how to achieve goals in the future with a particular emphasis on implementing development strategies on the job.

Mutually defined goals

Both parties agree the goals of the mentoring relationship. The mentee should have clear objectives for their involvement and the mentor should be honest about how they wish to and can contribute. As a result mentoring is unlikely to be effective if one party has been co-opted.

Relationship

Effective mentoring relies on having a sound and trusting relationship between the two parties. Both parties must feel comfortable to be able to share information without fear of being judged, or confidentiality being breached.

Collaboration

Successful mentoring relationships are built on collaboration. There is no assumption that the mentor knows better than the mentee – the relationship is one of discussion and consensus, challenge and feedback to identify a range of options from which the mentee needs to choose.

Clarifying Expectations from the ICER E-Mentoring Programme

The ICER 2015 e-mentoring programme is set up for the primary benefit of the female mentee – that brings with it a responsibility to make the most of the potential opportunities it brings.

Most importantly you need to have realistic expectations – this is more likely to engage your mentor and achieve your goals. You probably already have some ideas, and we will use the first webinar to further develop these.

Realistic goals for a mentoring relationship include:

- Identifying professional and development goals;
- Engaging in career, training and development planning;
- Making decisions based on pragmatic assessments of strengths and resources;
- Devising workable strategies to solve problems;
- Debriefing events to extract learning and other response options; and
- Guiding the development of leadership and other skills.

Keeping a Mentoring Journal

A mentoring journal can be a very useful source of information for later reference. It can help you to identify the extent to which you achieved your goals, help you to reflect on and be able to draw on your experience to explain what you learned from the experience of mentoring. This may be important if you are interviewed later.

The journal also works as a register for ideas for learning activities, reflections and projects. It gives you an ongoing record to pick up and discuss with the mentor at a later date, or activities to do on return to work as part of your development plan, and allows you to monitor your ongoing development.

Tips on journaling

- Write about facts and feelings, past and present
- Write after each mentoring meeting, and in between as well
- Schedule time to write in your journal – otherwise you'll keep putting it off
- Review what you've written every few months
- Some things you could write about each meeting could include:
    - What we talked about
    - The key takeaway message

- How I'm going to apply it
- Key challenges or barriers I might face
- Further questions for my mentor

The First Meeting

Remember, your first few conversations will be primarily about getting to know each other, building trust and agreeing on objectives. So here are some topics for your first conversation. Start today.

1. Get to know each other – share your CVs if possible and talk through some of the significant events in your career. Talk about your personal situation and how it impacts on your attitude to your work and career.

2. Talk about mentoring – discuss your motivation to participate in the ICER WIE Mentoring Program and what do you hope to gain from it.

3. Discuss some of the practical dimensions of the relationship – how will you set up and arrange meetings? Will you maintain contact frequently (monthly or every other month)?

4. Discuss your assumptions and limitations – what experiences or beliefs may be shaping your expectations or participation in this relationship?

5. Discuss your personal styles – if you have completed a behavior or personality tool, discuss the results and what it means for how you prefer to interact.

6. This all should be discussed and preferably recorded in a mentoring agreement. A sample mentoring agreement form is at the end of this document.

The Second Meeting: Progress!

During this conversation, or at the next one, you should also take time to discuss:

1. Ground rules for our meetings – e.g. times, duration, location, initiator, agendas, interruptions, cancellations, communication, confidentiality and boundaries.

2. The mentee's goals in detail – what do you want to achieve in your career and what are your criteria of success, both for your career and for this mentoring relationship. Note that identifying the mentee's specific career and professional development goals will be the focus of the first workshop, to be conducted in a few weeks.

Webinar participation and frequency of meetings

Please note that it is essential that you attend the webinar briefing session (in January) to ensure you get the most out of your mentoring relationship.

In order to check that each mentoring relationship has taken off, participants must confirm, by 31 March 2015, that they have succeeded in making initial contact and have had their first meeting(s). The initial meetings are particularly important for building trust in the relationship, goal setting and taking decisions on how to stay in touch (which medium to use to communicate) and how frequent the contacts will occur.

Participants in the WIE Mentoring Programme are expected to maintain frequent contact (e.g., monthly or every other month), particularly as contact is established and the mentor/mentee relationship is formed. An

important lesson from the pilot programme was that frequency of contact was more important that the communication method (by e-mail, skype, etc).

Mentors and mentees embark on this journey together. The June webinar is an opportunity for pairs to share how their mentoring relationship is evolving, if it meets with their expectations and to learn from other pairs.

A support network is available to participants to ensure all the benefits of the programme are realised.

Communication Skills for Mentoring

1. Effective feedback
2. Quality questioning
3. Active listening
4. Reframing

Effective Feedback

Many people find giving, receiving and asking for feedback difficult. The following tips are provided as suggestions for making feedback discussions a little easier and more meaningful. The tips can be used when providing feedback to colleagues, managers or people that we supervise.

Feedback works best when both people trust each other. Create or contribute to an environment where feedback is part of the way you work together by:

- developing positive working relationships that are built on trust;
- communicating openly – sharing information that helps others do their jobs and engaging others when making decisions that affect them;
- encouraging feedback – ask for feedback and give it regularly;
- role modelling an openness to feedback – accept positive feedback graciously; and
- acting on feedback – even if you don't agree with the feedback you may need to work on changing the other person's perception.

How to Give Feedback

Choose an appropriate time and place.

- give feedback as soon as possible (within 24 hours of a specific event or instance if you can) and in person where possible.
- consider what else is happening at the time – make sure you and the person are both able to discuss properly at the time you provide the feedback
- never give "negative" feedback in public.
- never give feedback when either of you are angry, upset or stressed.

Give feedback directly to the person. In some cases feedback comes "down the line". When this is the case ensure that you have enough information to make it meaningful and accurate.

Be prepared. Plan how you intend to give the feedback and have specific examples and other evidence available before you begin.

Before Giving Feedback

Consider how the other person may prefer to receive feedback. For example:

- do they find praise or positive feedback uncomfortable when given publicly?
- do they prefer feedback to be given directly and to the point?
- do they need time to reflect on the feedback before they are ready to talk about improvements or next steps?

Identify your objectives for giving the feedback:

- what do you want to achieve?
- what are the key points that you want to get across?

Reflect on what you want to talk about and what you will say:

- be specific and use examples; and
- if you are seeking change or improvement clarify exactly what you want.

What to Avoid: Specific Advice for Mentors

There are four behaviors that can be harmful to a mentoring relationship. These behaviors are:

Changing and cancelling meetings

This should go without saying, but it bears reference just the same. We understand that as a senior executive you will be busy and unexpected events crop up from time to time. However, cancelling meetings can be seen by your mentee as indicating a lack of commitment, particularly if a meeting gets postponed more than once. If an unforeseen serious event arises that you cannot escape, then do your best to give plenty of notice and make a new time at the time that you cancel.

Criticizing

When we criticize others, it's usually done with the best of intentions – the intention to help. But criticism is both evaluative and judgmental; it generates defensiveness rather than motivates change.

That doesn't mean that you can't give feedback if you think the mentee's behavior or plan is not appropriate. Try to give evaluative information, rather than neutral information. Describe what you see and the result it produces, don't appraise it.

Giving advice

What's wrong with advice? Many mentors think that is their role. The problem with advice is that it can set up a destructive pattern in a relationship. This is described by one psychologist as the "why don't you? – yes, but" game. The request for advice can create a mindset of rescuer-victim, but what can happen is that the advice is rejected (usually with

reasons) each time it's given, leading the mentor to eventually conclude that the person doesn't really want to solve the problem, and the relationship is damaged.

Rescuing

Rescuing a mentee at best reinforces helpless behavior and at worst can create a victim mentality and dependency. Your role as mentor is not to rescue your mentee from unpleasant or negative situations.

So what's the alternative? Information is the alternative. Give information about what you see, what the options are, and then assist the mentee to work through the options systematically to make a decision.

What to Avoid: Specific Advice for Mentees

For the mentee, there are three behaviors that can harm a mentoring relationship. These behaviors are:

Changing and cancelling meetings

This should go without saying, but it bears reference just the same. Your mentor makes time available to help you and you should do your best to make the appointed time. If an unforeseen serious event arises that you cannot escape, then do your best to give plenty of notice. Make time for any preparation needed.

Reacting poorly to feedback

An important skill for your development is to be able to hear feedback without getting defensive, to clarify alternative behaviors, and then being able to apply that feedback. If you respond poorly to feedback then others will stop giving it to you, and your development will stagnate. Responding poorly includes rejecting the feedback, arguing with the mentor, ignoring it, getting defensive, blaming others, or making excuses.

A closed mind

Your mentor has been chosen as someone who can offer you a range of alternative perspectives. Be open to ideas and don't reject them before you have given them due consideration. Find something you can use in everything your mentor says – this is an attitude that will ensure you make the most of the mentoring relationship.

References and Further Reading

Brockbank, A. & McGill, I. (2006). Facilitating Reflective Learning Through Mentoring & Coaching

Megginson, D. (2005). Mentoring In Action: A Practical Guide for Managers

Shea, G. F. (2002). Mentoring how to develop successful mentor behaviors

Zachary, L. J. & Fischler, L. A. (2009). The Mentee's Guide: Making Mentoring Work for You

Zachary, L. J. (2011). The Mentor's Guide: Facilitating Effective Learning Relationship

Sample Form of a Mentoring Agreement

This agreement is between: and on (date):
We have agreed on the following objectives for our mentoring relationship:
To ensure our relationship is mutually rewarding and achieves its objectives we agree to:
Meet regularly: How often will we meet? Who will make contact? How much time will be allocated?
Follow our agreed ground rules Which are…
We will regularly review how we are going and at the end of the year-long e-mentoring programme on these dates: Review 1 Review 2 Final review
Signed (mentor): Signed (mentee):