



## **MWWA Mentorship Action Plan**

**ADOPTED: July 9, 2024**

- I. **Objective/Goal:** Establish a sustained mentorship culture within MWWA unique to our members' needs, focusing on small group mentorship opportunities.
  
- II. **Purpose and Desired Outcome:**
  1. Foster engagement in MWWA and provide professional development/career guidance to members.
  2. Recruit and retain professionals in the water sector.
  
- III. **Value Proposition:** This effort will enhance professional development, knowledge transfer, empowerment, career growth, and confidence within our membership. Participants will have the opportunity to leave a legacy within MWWA where members "pay it forward." Recruitment and retention of professionals within the water sector will be a resulting benefit.
  
- IV. **Challenges and Opportunities:**
  - a. Opportunities:
    - i. Facilitate knowledge and experience sharing.
    - ii. Enhance and promote professional/career development.
    - iii. Encourage diverse perspectives and cross-training.
    - iv. Showcase career opportunities within the profession.
    - v. Cross pollinate ideas.
    - vi. Increase members' satisfaction with work.
  - b. Challenges:
    - i. Time commitment.
    - ii. Engaging participants and keeping them engaged, especially those newer to the industry.
    - iii. Obtaining employer support.
  
- V. **Goal Setting:**
  1. **Summer Expo:**

- a. Goal: Utilize MWWA's most well-attended event to facilitate connections and promote a mentorship culture.
- b. Committees Assigned: All
- c. Timeline: Before Summer Expo
- d. Action Steps:
  - i. Implement visible identification for participants (same color shirts).
  - ii. Enlist all committee members to be ambassadors.
  - iii. Position a "booth" at the front of the Expo to foster interaction with attendees who might have questions – Banner "I know stuff, let's talk."
  - iv. Pre-Expo advertisement.
  - v. Have Task Force break up into groups and participate in different already established events, create opportunities for collaboration and relationship building. Strategically place people throughout the event to engage.
- e. Budget: Allocate funds for booth setup (\$100 for Banner) and shirts (approx. \$18 per volunteer; 100 committee members = \$1,800).
- f. Evaluation: Send survey after the Expo to Committee members to judge effectiveness of outreach and to measure connections made, solicit feedback and obtain ideas for following year.

## **2. Small Group Mentoring Opportunities: "Water Professionals Network"**

- a. Goal:
  - i. Create consistent groups to foster relationships and resource sharing.
  - ii. Continue existing Roundtable and Meet & Greet opportunities and add other focused groups to foster engagement.
  - iii. Organize mentor-led sessions on various topics identified by survey results as most of interest to the membership: Treatment, Distribution, Leadership Skills, and Management.
  - iv. Coordinate field trips and hands-on training.
  - v. Provide avenues for 1-on-1 interaction/meetings upon request.
  - vi. Organize a panel event showcasing pathways that the people on our task force have followed based on their career goals/aspirations, where they started from and where they are now.
- b. Recruitment: Recruit participants through targeted outreach and communication.
- c. Support: Offer ongoing support, resources, and feedback mechanisms for participants.
- d. Evaluation: Continuously evaluate the program's effectiveness and make necessary adjustments, consider ideas from participants to further grow and enhance the program.
  - i. **Roundtables and Treat & Meets**

1. Staff Assigned: Jennifer Pederson
2. Committees Assigned: Involvement of Committees will depend on the topics (for instance: Membership/PR are involved with new member roundtables; EWP Committee is involved with Treat & Meets & Intern Roundtable; Technical Committee on roundtable for technical topics)
3. Action Steps:
  - a. Continue offering existing Roundtables for groups to foster relationships and share ideas.
    - i. Superintendents (Quarterly)
    - ii. New Members (Quarterly)
    - iii. Interns (start of co-op/internship cycle – June, potentially Sept. and January as well if intern cycles align)
  - b. Offer “How to apply for a license” Roundtable for Operators before the end of September 2024
  - c. Offer roundtable to present skills that aspiring mentees could use to find and reach out to mentors outside of an organized mentorship program in 2025 (Maybe ask NEWWA and NEWEA to come talk about their programs)
  - d. Continue offering existing Treat & Meets which provide opportunities to see different kinds of treatment plants (learn about technology you may not be familiar with, see different operations) and provide an informal networking opportunity after. (4-5 per year, geographically dispersed)
  - e. Identify operational, technical, regulatory, customer service topics as they arise and offer Roundtables or briefings to help members understand the issues and share how they are approaching it as a knowledge exchange (examples of this are flushing, PFAS, customer payments, conservation programs). (As needed/as requested basis)
  - f. Advertise in “Updates from MWWA” Email Blasts as well as direct outreach to interested cohorts.
4. Timeline: See above for frequency of each
5. Budget: Roundtables should be no additional cost as long as meeting virtually; Treat & Meets are embedded in Emerging Water Professionals budget (currently \$1,500), if attendance increases at these events, budget increase may need to be requested. These activities are free for members to participate in.

6. Evaluation:
    - a. Do we see increased participation in these events? Did we effectively hold additional roundtables, with new topics?
    - b. Launch Poll at the end of the session to Roundtable to see if the topic met the needs and see if they have other topics they would like to see covered.
- ii. Meet & Greets at Membership Meetings**
1. Committees Assigned: Program & Membership/PR
  2. Action Steps:
    - a. Task Program and Membership/PR Committees to review existing efforts and rebrand from “New Member Meet & Greet” to something more inclusive and perhaps tied into the Water Professionals Network theme
    - b. Recruit past Board members to participate.
  3. Timeline: Have revamped program ready to launch at January 2025 Membership Meeting; offer at January, March, October, November Membership Meetings
  4. Budget: To be determined after rebranding
  5. Evaluation:
    - a. Was there increased participation at the January meeting in the Meet & Greet and other Meet and Greets throughout the year?
    - b. Add question to Program Evaluation about usefulness of Meet & Greet toward facilitating networking.
- iii. Operator Study Group**
1. Committees Assigned: Education & Operator Committees
  2. Action Steps:
    - a. Survey interest (completed early 2024)
    - b. Assemble subcommittee to work on offering a Math study session for the first opportunity.
    - c. Additional topics to follow based on interest.
  3. Timeline:
    - a. Math study group to be offered by end of September 2024
  4. Budget: To be determined if technology is needed to facilitate breakout session on zoom (i.e., writeable tablets to show on Zoom whiteboard)
  5. Evaluation: Survey after the session(s) to determine effectiveness and satisfaction
- iv. PE/FE/EIT Study Group**
1. Committees Assigned: Emerging Water Professionals

2. Action Steps:
    - a. Develop Survey to gauge interest.
    - b. Launch Survey
    - c. Review results.
    - d. If interest exists, determine if outside support is needed to facilitate study group sessions.
    - e. Consider annual or bi-annual panel discussion lead by those who recently sat for the exam(s)
  3. Timeline: Implementation target January 2025
  4. Budget: To be determined based on whether technical expertise is needed.
  5. Evaluation: Survey after the session to determine effectiveness, inquire to see who may be willing to support this initiative moving forward
- v. Create a “Water Professionals Network Directory”**
1. Staff Assigned: Jennifer Pederson; Executive Director reach back out to Mentor Task Force for those interested in working toward implementation; All Committees will be encouraged to see how they can support this goal.
  2. Action Steps:
    - a. Look to see if there are examples of successful directories/networks that other associations have established.
    - b. Recruit participants willing to work one-on-one with individuals on particular topics.
    - c. Create intake form and review process (base the form off of topics in our survey, ask type of treatment technology experience, distribution, other subsets under main topic areas).
    - d. Evaluate whether this coordinates with the Community Bulletin Board or is a different forum or a static directory (i.e. make a webpage of those contacts within the Member Center for others to search for someone with an expertise).
  3. Timeline: Recruit over the late summer/early fall for launch before no later than June 2025.
  4. Budget: No anticipated cost.
  5. Evaluation: Check in with listed Water Professionals Network Directory participants quarterly to see if they have been sought out for advice; identify ways to further engage prospective mentees.

### **3. Utilize MWWA Training Programs to Foster Mentorship Culture**

- a. Goal: Expand opportunities that operators have to understand career pathways and professional growth and development, especially in the areas of leadership skills and management, and educate on the benefits of mentorship
- b. Committees Assigned: Education Committee; Staff Assigned: Dan Laprade, Jennifer Pederson
- c. Action Steps:
  - i. Host a training on how to develop a mentoring program within your organization (third party will be needed).
  - ii. Consider more Management-focused training.
  - iii. Consider more field/hands-on training to get operators interacting more with each other within a training setting.
  - iv. Promote small group growth, learning and development opportunities at the start of each training (this could be introductions if class-size allows or adding 15 minutes to the start of the agenda for “water professionals networking”)
  - v. Use training as an opportunity to spread the word about the Water Professionals Network opportunities/activities (have flyer available about the network with QR code to find more information).
  - vi. Consider utilizing Classroom platform to develop self-paced training for leadership/management/HR topics so they may be taken when needed/at each member’s convenience throughout the year (third party may be needed on topics where a particular expertise is needed, i.e. labor laws – look to Mass Municipal Association Supervisory program as a model to emulate).
- d. Timeline: On-going and reviewed annually in development of Education Committee work plan.
- e. Budget: Funding will likely be required to hire instructors with expertise on establishing mentoring programs and/or management topic expertise. Ed Committee should make funding requests in advance of budget preparation (usually late September/early October).
- f. Evaluation: Survey after the session to determine effectiveness and yearly during development of Education Committee workplan.

**4. Utilize MWWA Communication Efforts to Promote and Enhance the Visibility of the “Water Professional Network”**

- a. Goal: Make more people (general public and MWWA members) aware of the professionalism of water operators and the good work being done by utilities. Provide easily accessible avenues for peer-to-peer interaction through the MWWA Community Bulletin Board.
- b. Committees Assigned: All Committees are encouraged to see where they can support this effort, with Membership/PR and Operator Committees leading several of the action steps.

- c. Action Steps:
  - i. Continue “Member Monday” on LinkedIn page and “X”; this will require much more content to sustain.
  - ii. Highlight utility projects that are improving water quality in communities.
    - 1. Consider resharing content from our members and their companies/utilities for added content.
  - iii. Evaluate how to drive more interaction on the Community Bulletin Board – this could include developing a brief “how to” video. Can the Community Bulletin Board be used as a “forum” to allow Mentors to be consulted and for them to give responses? Use email blasts to promote Community Bulletin Board (prominent button that will bring member directly to the page)
  - iv. Work on short videos focused on water operators to highlight the profession and its benefits which can be used by utilities on their own websites, promotion through social media, or at student outreach activities (career fairs, school presentations, environmental clubs).
- d. Timeline:
  - i. Produce one Operator Video by end of 2024.
  - ii. Social Media Posting – ongoing.
  - iii. Develop plan to increase interaction on Community Bulletin Board by October 2024.
- e. Budget: Funding may be needed for video production to produce the video highlighting operators –Project not to exceed \$20,000.
- f. Evaluation:
  - i. Was one video created to highlight the operator profession?
  - ii. Were we able to do a Member Monday at least 2 Mondays a month?
  - iii. Did we increase interaction and posting to the Community Bulletin Board by June 2025?

**VI. Possible Future Needs:**

- a. Training: As needed provide mentorship training sessions for mentors and orientation sessions for mentees.
- b. Incentives: May need to provide mentors with an incentive to participate (i.e. free attendance at a training or meeting) if we do not have good participation initially.

**VII. Conclusion:** By following this action plan, MWWA will successfully develop and implement a mentorship culture tailored to its members' needs, fostering community, professional growth, engagement, retention, and pride within the water sector.