



Mentorship Rocket Proposal

Presented to the WEAO Board

June 26, 2018

Executive Summary

WEAO's current mentorship program has been running for five years and has been increasing annually with 7 mentors in its inaugural year to 21 mentors in 2017. The current program matches a mentor and mentee with the expectation that they will communicate with one another for the duration of the program. All program management, including the process of pair matching, is done by the YP Mentorship sub-committee. The rapid program growth and recent feedback have brought us to the realization that our status quo may no longer be most efficient or relevant way to implement knowledge exchange.

A \$1500 investment for the online Mentorship Rocket program for 2018 will give WEAO access to an online program with the capacity to facilitate up to 50 participants. Mentees will be able to reserve one hour sessions (set by each mentor) on a first come first served basis. The program is cost effective, user-friendly and participation driven. It provides flexibility for mentors without requiring too much of their time. Mentees will need to be active within this program in order to benefit from it which will eliminate the risk of poor program reviews due to communication gaps.

Last year, WEF keynote speaker Fredi Lajvardi delivered a presentation on the importance of passing on experience to the next generation and thinking outside of the status quo. The implementation of this new program will be a step towards increasing knowledge exchange within our industry and, with the support of past and current WEAO board members, will help in building a succession plan within WEAO.

Mission – We connect and enrich the expertise of professionals who protect Ontario’s water environment.

Vision – Essential to all professional dedicated to sustaining Ontario’s water environment.

Focus Areas

- Knowledge Exchange
- Emerging Trends and Regulations
- Communications
- Sustainable Business
- Membership
- Collaboration with External Stakeholders

Background

The current mentorship program has been running for five years with an average of approximately 20 participants (mentors and mentees) each year. It runs from October to April. A sub-committee of the YP committee coordinates the program which involves soliciting mentors and mentees, matching the mentors with mentees, and monitoring the progress of the program with mid-term and end-of-program surveys. There have been attempts to bring the program participants together at the Holiday Bash (2017) and there is a Mentorship event at the Annual Conference on the Sunday afternoon, following WEAO’s AGM. Participation in these events has been less than optimal.

Business Need

Young professionals are our leaders of tomorrow. It is in WEAO’s best interest to provide industry knowledge and strengthen a succession plan for the future of Ontario’s water and wastewater sector. With the increasing participation of WEAO’s Mentorship Program, it is important maintain growth and development within the program itself. An online based program will help increase organization and communication throughout, will aid in mentor/mentee tracking, and will help work towards WEAO’s mission.

Drivers for Change

- **Efficiency:** Increase the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of the program.
- **Knowledge exchange:** instead of having one mentor/mentee, there will be an opportunity to engage with multiple people. This will aid in a greater transfer of knowledge.
- **Technology:** In 2018 a web-based program will be well accepted.
- **Policy:** With the development of WEAO's Strategic Plan, it is important to develop programs to align with plan goals and objectives.

Strategic Fit

Developing WEAO's mentorship program aligns with these goals from WEAO's strategic plan.

Membership

Goal 2. Develop a plan to transition emerging leaders into leadership roles.

Objective 2b. Develop transition blueprints (as a living document) to implement succession planning and future leadership within WEAO committees. Continue to monitor and evaluate on an annual basis.

Having an online based system will enable leadership transition and organization of statistics.

Sustainable Business

Goal 5. Volunteer and staff development to prepare organization and ensure organization has people in leadership capacities for a sustainable and growing future.

Objective 5b. Create optimum opportunities to engage new leaders.

Requirements

- \$1500 investment for the online Mentorship Rocket program for 2018 (can be a sponsorship opportunity for future years).
- Up 50 participants (maximum for \$1500 fee).
- Commitment from at least 25 mentors.

Options

The Status Quo

The current mentorship program is managed by the Mentorship sub-committee within WEAO's YP committee. The Mentorship sub-committee consists of a lead and 4 additional YPC members. The program actively runs September through April. The typical schedule of dates for the program are:

July – Mentors and mentees submit program applications.

August – The Mentorship sub-committee assesses each application and pairs a mentee with a mentor based on the given information.

September – Program start. Each mentor and mentee pair are connected via email and are encouraged to communicate with one another based on each person's availability.

November – A check-in survey (for the purpose of communication and pairing evaluation) is sent to mentors and mentees.

December – Program participants are encouraged to attend the WEAO/OWWA Holiday Bash.

April – Program participants are invited to attend the Mentorship Program Social at the WEAO Conference. This social consists of a presentation from the Mentorship sub-committee and a presentation from a mentor/mentee pair.

April-May – A program completion survey is distributed. Program participants are asked to evaluate their experience and the program overall.

Current Cost to WEAO: zero

This program structure limits knowledge exchange between multiple mentor/mentee matches. Although this may be a good opportunity to build a longstanding relationship between matched pairs, it also has the possibility of creating a poor example of our program. Some weaknesses of the current method include pairs that are not matched well (personality, professionalism, intentions) and pairs in which one person does not reciprocate any form of communication.

Mentorship Rocket (MR)

For mentors, this is a low commitment, high impact micro mentoring structure. The fee of \$1500 gives access for 12 months. Associations are able to customize the program home page with a logo and information about their program. All aspects of this online program will continue to be maintained by the mentorship sub-committee and the WEAO administration. A timeline of program tasks is:

Selection of mentors - Once mentors are selected, they are given access to the online program. Mentors will be asked to upload a brief biography and a photo. They will also

be asked to select dates they are available to meet with mentees. The number of sessions required can be chosen by the system administrator.

Mentee access – Mentees will be given access to the online program and will be notified that they must register and agree to program terms and conditions by a date set by the system administrator. After the cut-off date, registration will close and session selection will begin.

Session selection – Mentees will be able to select from all of the mentors' available session dates. The administrator may set a limit of sessions each mentee may choose for one mentor, including the option of allowing only one session selection per mentor.

The system administrator will require participants' first and last name, their email address and their company name in order to give participants access. This ensures all program participants are pre-approved by WEAO and the Mentorship sub-committee. The built-in administrator dashboard and exportable reports help to measure participants' engagement within the program.

Important program dates can be pre-set within the program to improve management.

Risk

- Insufficient number of mentors
- Mentors not compliant with uploading their information into program
- Mentors not meeting expectations of program
- Mentors/mentees unable to access the program online
- Mentees do not meet with the mentors of their choice

The probability of the above risks is considered to be low. There are many seasoned professionals in the industry to fulfill the mentor requirements. The program is user-friendly and provides flexibility for mentors. Mentees will be able to choose their mentor sessions on a first come, first served basis. If there is a sufficient number of mentors representing the industry sector (municipalities, consultants, suppliers, operators), the mentees will have access to a selection of mentors and will have the opportunity to use the program to fulfill their expectations.

Participant risks, including but not limited to those surrounding the *Me Too* movement, can be addressed to the best of our abilities in the program's terms and conditions. Anyone who fails to abide by the program's terms and conditions will be immediately

removed. There should be no financial risk associated with this program given that WEAO has already established a successful mentorship program.

Implementation Plan

Upon approval from the board and support from WEAO, Mentorship Rocket can allow access to the program as soon as the following day. During the months of July and August would be the time to solicit 25 mentors. The current Mentorship Program already has an established relationship with a number of mentor candidates. With the help of WEAO Board Members and the WEAO Administration, collecting up to 25 strong mentors should be achievable by late July. A program signup sheet was present at the 2018 WEAO Conference. Three new mentors and fourteen mentees identified that they would be interested in participating in the 2018-2019 program. The mentorship sub-committee will distribute a call for mentee applications in July and August through Twitter and the YP Monthly Newsletter. Mentee selection will be on track for early September. Once the program is initiated online, members of the Mentorship sub-committee will be available to plan at least one fall and one winter mentor/mentee workshop, seminar, or meet and greet.

Recommendation

To proceed with Mentorship Rocket for the 2018-2019 program and assess success based on:

- Positive feedback from associations
 - One long-standing MR client reports a growth of new members every time it launches its annual program. Each time, as many as 30-40 new young members signing up just to be part of the mentorship program.
 - The software assistance of MR for including mentors and mentees online, and facilitating mentee-mentor matches, eliminates heavy dependence on volunteers' time. Programs readily can be scaled up, allowing for easy expansion as subsequent editions of an association's program grow through popularity.
- Positive feedback from mentors
 - A strong consensus is that mentors gain as much as they give. The mentoring sessions are excellent opportunities to hear how the rising talent in an industry sees the future.
 - 100% of the mentors who responded in surveys would recommend the program to other executives
 - 70-80% of mentors volunteer to participate again year to year
- Positive feedback from mentees

- Mentees can select multiple mentors, broadening the learning experience and their industry connections.
- Overwhelmingly, mentees said the program was helpful to them and 82% of the mentees expected to keep in touch informally with their program mentors.