The most successful of mentoring relationships start with developing goals, goals that begin as STARTER goals and move to SMART goals. These goals provide a foundation for the mentoring relationship by providing direction and a sense of purpose.

WHERE DO I START?

Two great ways to begin. From these discussions, “starter” goals will emerge. Starter goals are vague and general topics that form the basis for specific goals.

What do you want to be different? Create a “from-to” statement. It should follow the format “I want to go FROM [where I am now] TO [change you want to see]. Here are some examples:

- FROM a new employee who doesn’t understand how to get things done here TO someone who understands how to navigate company culture with ease.
- FROM a project manager with no direct client experience TO someone who can develop business and is trusted by my clients.
- FROM a team leader who has difficulty dealing with conflict TO a skilled leader who feels comfortable handling conflict.

Use these FROM/TO statements to start to uncover more specific goals.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE:

- Get to know each other and develop an authentic relationship BEFORE exploring goals
- Explore “What if...?”
- Tap into best practices, and tools that can help your mentee grow.
- Focus on maximizing strengths rather than addressing weaknesses.

Act like a journalist. Journalists are very curious and ask lots of questions. Now is a time to be curious and ask lots of questions of yourself/your mentee to uncover possible goals. Ask these questions:

- “WHY?” Why did you want to take part in this mentoring to begin with?
- “WHAT?” What do you hope to learn? What do you hope to gain from this experience?
- “HOW?” How will you get there?

Take the time to discuss these questions. As answers emerge, you’ll begin to see areas where you can formulate goals.

Feedback may be considered the secret ingredient to SMART goals. To best utilize your SMART goals, develop a goal where you can receive regular feedback. Establish a way to track your progress towards your goal. This provides an opportunity

S  Have you described a specific behavior?
M  Have you described a behavior that is observable?
A  Does your goal have forward momentum?
R  Is your goal practical?
T  Have you set a time-frame?