Better Together
Mentor Team vs Mentor

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Program and Staff Development Specialist

Kelle Ashley
County Extension Agent, 4-H Youth Development

Session Overview

Positive mentor experience can:

- Support retaining new employees
- Providing opportunities for mid-career and veteran staff to have leadership opportunities

Challenge:

Often hard to find **one person** to be the perfect fit to holistically support a new Extension Agent.

Objective:

How University of Georgia Extension (UGA) changed their mentor program to have mentor teams instead of a single mentor for each new agent.

Data: Mentee and mentor surveys UGA

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Session Overview

Research on Mentorship

History of the UGA Extension
New County Agent Mentorship Program

Describe the current Mentorship Program

Share findings and results from study

Discussion and Q&A

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What is a Mentor?

- **Seasoned employee**

- Shares **information** and **recommendations** related to organizational:
  - Values
  - Beliefs
  - Norms
  - Accepted rituals

- **Ability to**:
  - Teach
  - Guide
  - Protect their mentee

- **Through:**
  - Providing support (vocational and psychosocial)
  - Serving as a role model for desired behaviors

(Denny, 2016; Gibson, Tesone, & Buchalski, 2000; Godwin, Diem, & Maddy, 2011; Lankau & Chung, 1998; Mincemoyer & Thomson, 1998)

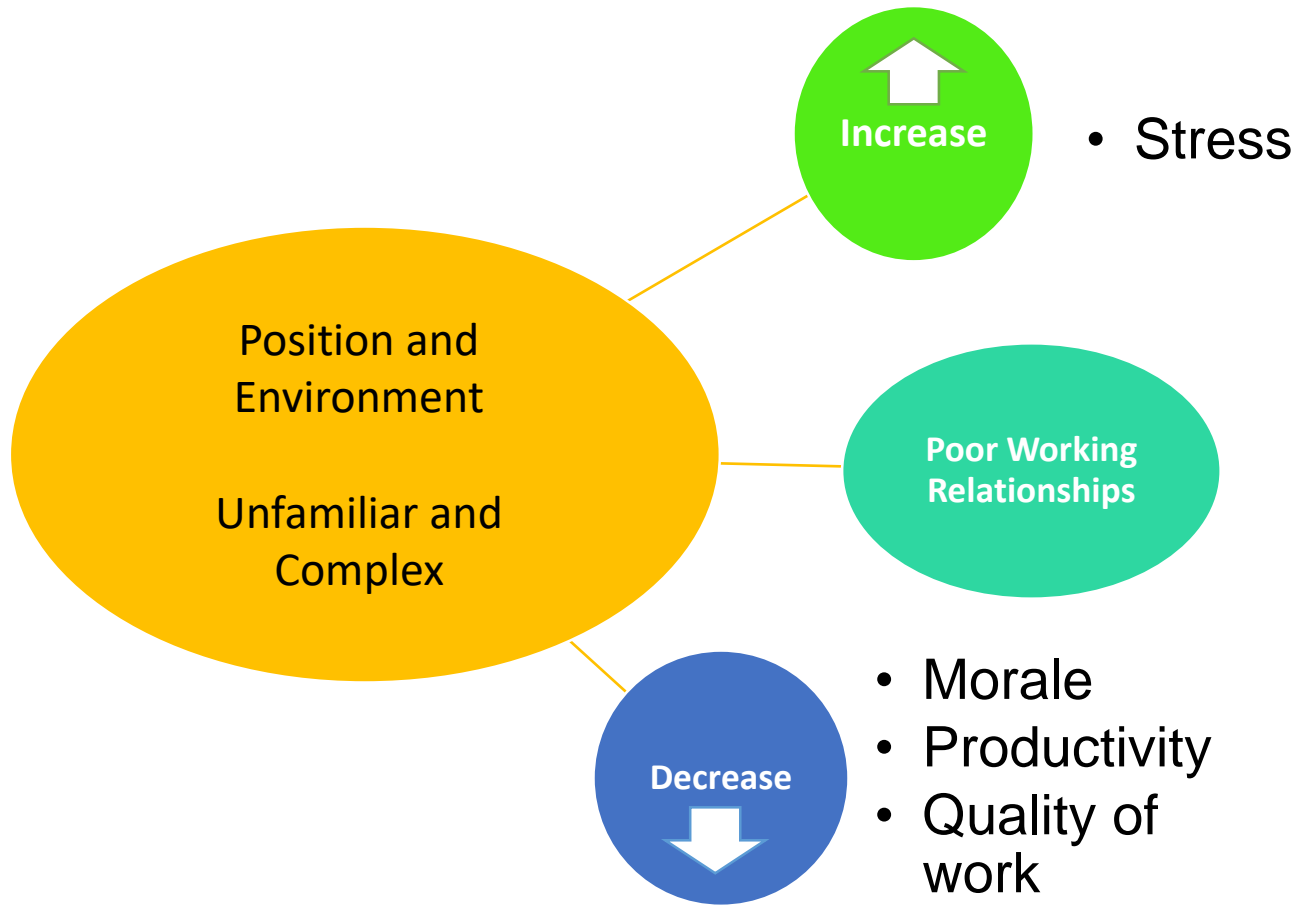*Empowering You for a Better Future*

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Why Are Mentors Important?

Employee Retention – **WITHOUT** Guidance – New Employees

Increase

- Stress

Position and Environment

Unfamiliar and Complex

Poor Working Relationships

Decrease

- Morale
- Productivity
- Quality of work

(Godwin et al., 2011; Place & Bailey, 2010)

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Why Are Mentors Important?
Employee Retention

Agents identified a mentoring program as a critical piece in employee retention.

Quality Mentors Can:

- Provide strategies to handling stress and balancing work and family

- Convey the values of the organization

- Help their mentees identify as an integral part of the organization.

- Model a positive attitude towards work

(Payne & Huffman, 2005; Strong & Harder; 2009)

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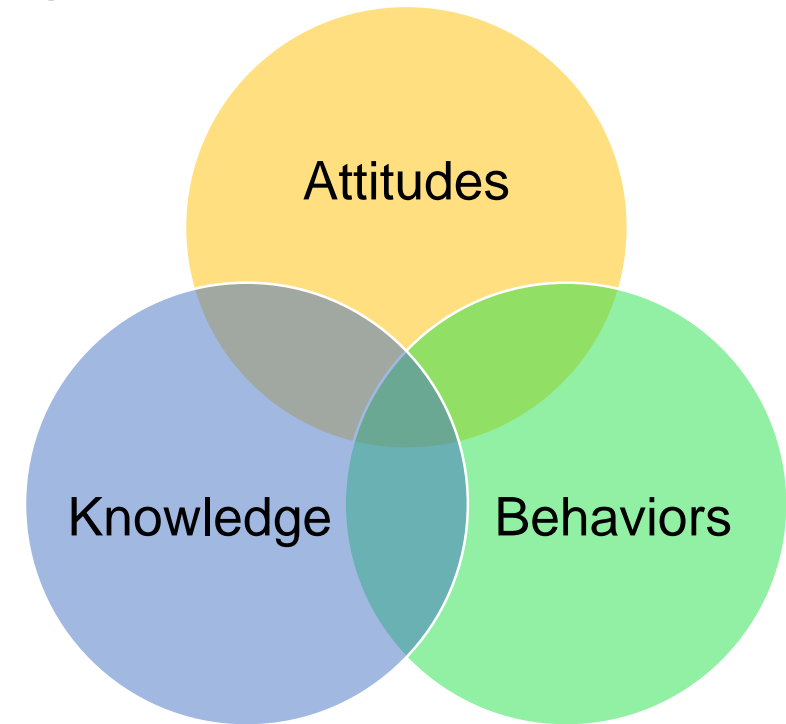# Why Are Mentors Important?
Employee Retention

A positive mentor-mentee relationship promotes:

- Attitudes
- Behaviors
- Knowledge

This can influence an individual's desire to commit to an organization and see opportunity for advancement within that organization.

(Payne & Huffman, 2005)

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Why Do We Need Mentors?

- Retain new hires
  - Support new agents as they become acclimated to their new roles
  - Peer-to-peer interaction and support from others doing similar jobs

- Organizational Support
  - Navigation of organizational structure and culture
  - District level support is spread between all agents in the district
  - New agents need additional people to call on for support and keep a pulse on their experience

- Create a safe space and reality check

- Provide leadership opportunities for experienced agents

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Background:
Extension Employee Retention Challenges

- Cooperative Extension
  - Employee Attrition
  - Costs associated with employee turnover

- UGA Extension
  - One-third of the total 330 county agents [Family and Consumer Science (FACS), 4-H and Agriculture and Natural Resource agents (ANR)] have five years or less of experience
  - More agents nearing retirement
  - Recession caused hiring freeze and early retirements, increasing the gap in service

- UGA Extension efforts to build a more sustainable workforce
  - Newly revamped mentoring program

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UGA Extension Mentor Program: Past Program

- 1 mentor

- Assigned by district (District Director and Program Development Coordinator)

- Managed District by District
  - Mentors were expected to complete a brief report on visit, but not consistent or formal accountability system

- Structure not provided for:
  - Ongoing support for mentors
  - Formal process for feedback from mentees

- Expectation of knowledge transfer

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UGA Extension Mentor Program: Past Program

Needs Assessment and Program Review

- Formal and Informal feedback that the one mentor program was not meeting needs
  - mentees
  - mentors
  - district level administration

- Created a review committee
  - Specialists
  - District Administration
  - Agents/Mentors

- Reviewed multiple data sources

- Designed new version of a mentor program

- Re-evaluated all current mentors before retaining

  and training in new system

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Poll

For the states with mentor programs, is the program meeting your needs?

- Yes
- Somewhat
- No

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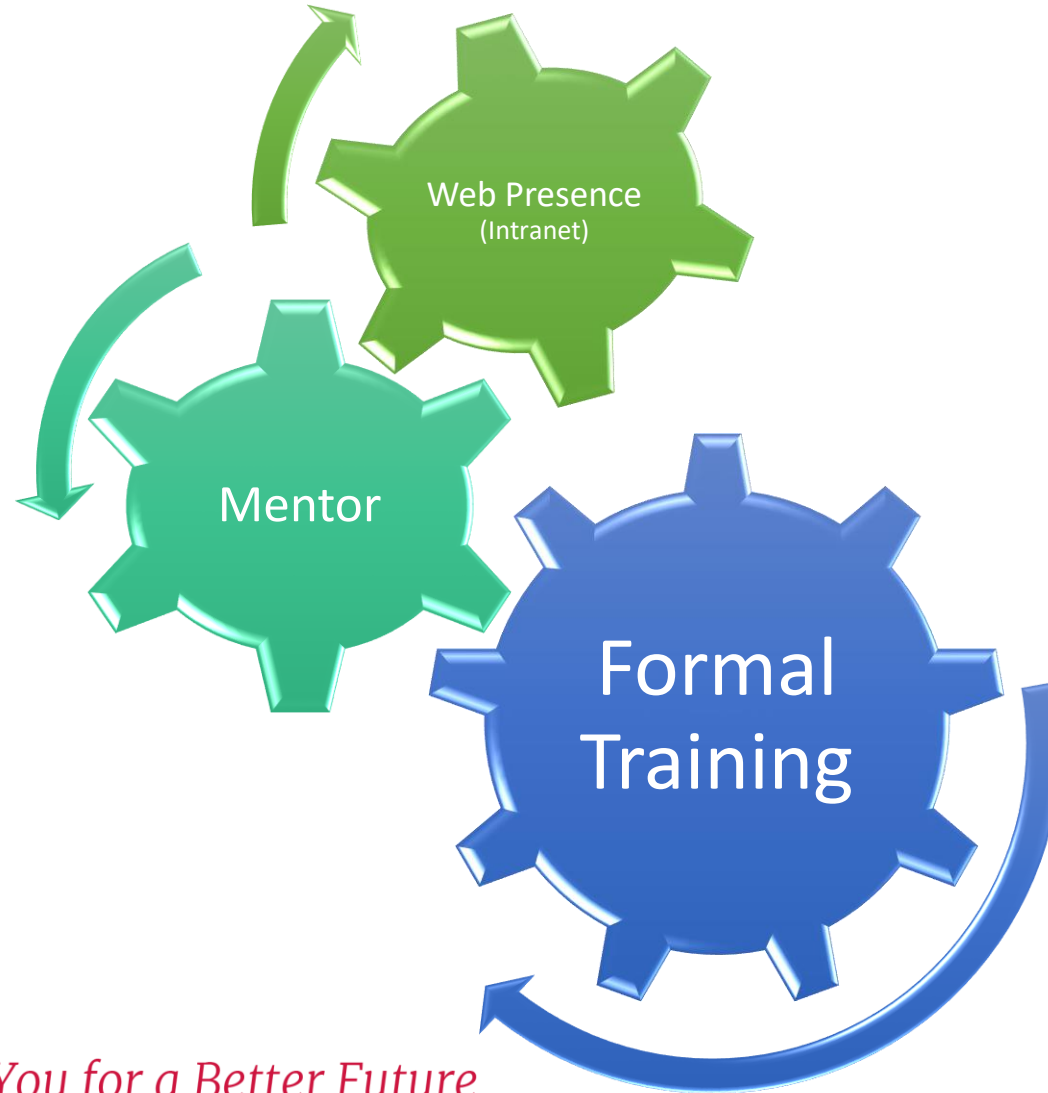# UGA Extension Mentor Program: Past Program

Review Committee Findings:

- Past hiring/retention led to uneven distribution of employees' years of service

- Some mentees felt like their some mentors were:
  - disconnected from experience of being new based on years of service
  - just going through the motions/checking a box to completing duties

- One mentor does not have strengths in all areas

- Future hiring prediction
  - Needed to get ready for hiring increase of the last few years

- Peer mentoring critical to learn to navigate the organization and building technical skills

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New Agent Onboarding Experience Components

Web Presence (Intranet)

Mentor

Formal Training

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UGA Extension Professional Development Agent ROADMAP

Mentors Assigned

Risk Management

10 days

Intro to Extension

Policies, Procedure, & Protocol (P3)

60 days

Foundations 1

County Orientation

District Orientation

In-County Support

Mentor Support

Foundations of Communications

FACS

4-H

9 mos.

Foundations 2

4-H Basics

ANR

Program Area Foundations

Mentor Support

Ongoing Internal Professional Development

3 yrs.

Mentor Training

5 yrs.

Extension Academy

eXtend

Leadership Development

New Mentor Program

Eligibility:

- 3+ years of experience
- completed the mentor training

Philosophy:

coach and connect mentee with resources and networks

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New Mentor Program Roles:
All Formal Mentors Expectations

- ✓ Coach new agents to help them find answers

- ✓ Connect new agents to resources and experiences

- ✓ Reinforce vision, mission, philosophy of Extension and CAES

- ✓ Emphasize their role in Extension's mission

- ✓ Build trust

- ✓ Support problem solving

- ✓ Help fill in the gaps between trainings and the daily realities of the job

- ✓ Share Best Practices: Time management, work load/expectations, balancing, general mentorship

- ✓ Answer Questions!

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Commitments

- Work with new agent during their first year of employment

➢ <u>Face-to-face:</u>
- Minimum of 2 visits in the first 3 months
- 4-12 months communicate as needed, observe, and connect

➢ <u>Phone Call with Mentee:</u>
- 1st week
- Within 2 weeks after each face-to-face visit
- And as needed

➢ <u>Provide feedback</u> via online surveys (quarterly & after visits)
➢ A maximum of two mentees per mentor

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Checklist

✓Week 1

   Mentor calls mentee to welcome them and schedule first visit.

   Mentee completes survey shared with mentor team related to their strengths, preferences, and concerns

✓30 – 45 Days: Mentor visit to mentee's county (Complete check-in survey after visit)

✓60 – 90 Days: Mentee visits mentor's county (Complete check-in survey after visit)

✓90 Days: Quarter 1 (Complete check-in survey for Q1)

   Mentor team meets with District to customize remaining experience

✓Quarter 2/3/4 (Complete check-in survey for Quarter)

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Types of Formal Mentor Roles

➤ Program Mentor

➤ Relationship Mentor

Overall mentor program managed by **state level**

Mentor Assignments:

District level assign both mentors once new county agent is hired

Mentor Team = District Rep, Program Mentor, Relationship Mentor, and may include (peer coach and/or community coach)

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Mentor Support: Initial Mentor Training

Pre-Work – Review Program Overview PowerPoint

UGA Extension
Program Overview
For Mentoring New Agents

Presented by:
Program and Staff Development Specialist
Office of Learning and Organizational Development
UGA Extension

Tool for Coaching

GROW®
Coaching for Breakthrough
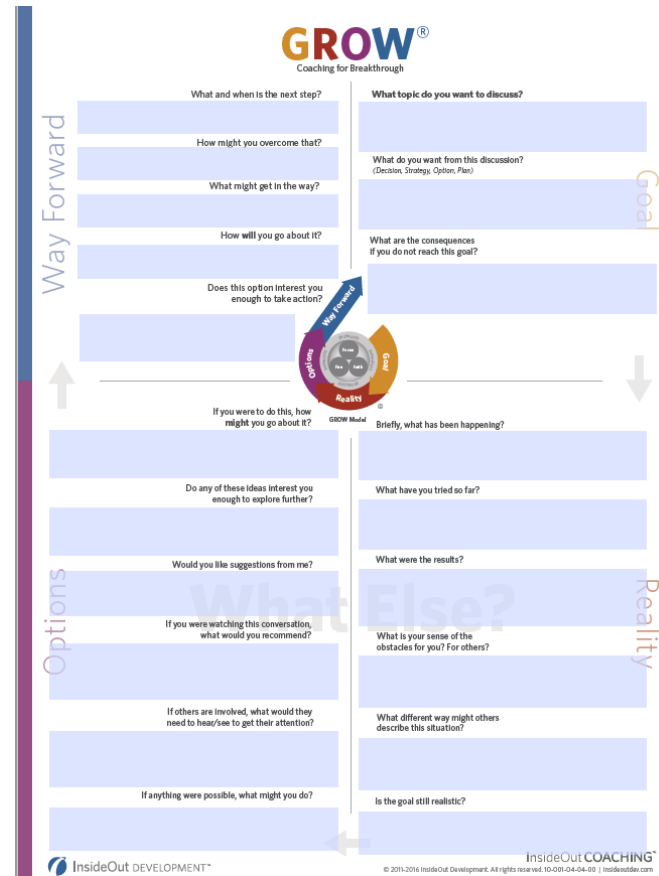
Face-to-Face 1 Day Training

Mentoring Methods
For The Experienced County Extension Agent
January 7, 2019
Georgia Farm Bureau, 5th Floor Dining Room
1620 Bass Road   Macon, GA 31209

Session Coordinator:
Kristi Farner, Ph.D., Program and Staff Development Specialist   kfarner@uga.edu   cell: 770-598-4798
Office of Learning and Organizational Development, UGA Extension

AGENDA

10:00 am	Welcome & Overview of Training – Kristi Farner Pre-Work (Mentor Program Review)
10:30 am	Becoming the Coaching Mentor – Kristi Farner a. Coaching Drives Results b. The Nature of Performance c. Coaching for Breakthrough
12:15 pm	Lunch On Your Own
1:15 pm	Becoming the Coaching Mentor (continued) d. Coaching for Breakthrough (continued) e. Coaching Check-ins & Feedback
2:45 pm	Insights & Final Expectations of Mentoring – Kisha Faulk, NW FACS PDC
3:30 pm	Wrap-Up, Evaluation, & Adjourn

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Mentor Support: Online Resources

Mentor Support: Mentor Support Network email series

You have been added to the Mentoring Network

Thank you for taking on the responsibility of mentoring a new County Extension Agent. Over the next year, you will support a new agent as they become acclimated to their new role. These emails aim to support your efforts and provide reminders about the benchmarks throughout the year. You will help your mentee navigate the organizational structure and culture of Extension through coaching and connecting. In order to best support the new agent's career development they will be matched with both a Program Mentor and a Relationship Mentor. The mentee's Program Development Coordinator should have set up a 3 month check-in call with you and the other mentor on the team. If this has not been set up yet please reach out to them.

Program Mentor Responsibilities:

- Provide basic program information
- Connect to technical experts
- Coordinate site visits
- Planning and reporting support

1

- Expanding on/clarifying extension trainings
- Explain professional organizations

Relationship Mentor Responsibilities:

- Personnel Management
  - Supervising employees and volunteers
  - Record keeping
- Interacting with the community
  - Identify and sustain relationships with stakeholders

Make a great first impression!

At this point you have chatted with your mentor over the phone and have set up your first meeting. Make sure that you have a plan in place before arriving at their office. Carve out enough time to accomplish your agenda, but you many also want to take your mentor out for lunch and get to know them on a personal level.

Relationship Mentor Suggested Topics and Activities:

- Organizational Development
  - Daily Planning (calendars)
    - CAES Calendar
  - Organizing work area
  - Setting up filing system
- Time Management
  - Scheduling meetings and programs
  - Office conferences
  - Returning phone calls and responding to emails
- Personnel Management
  - Best practices for supervising employees

How did your mentor visit go?
We want to hear about it.

If you have not already filled out the "Agent Mentor Check-In Survey" on your visit with your mentee please click here.

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Mentor Support: Community of Practice Quarterly Support Mentor Meetings

Not trying to be nosey, just here to encourage you to keep up the good work!

Join us for the 2nd Quarter Zoom Meeting.
The mentor network is here to help you be the best mentor you can be! Support calls happen every January, April, July, and October for 30 minutes and divided up by type of mentor. Email reminders will go out and all calls are in ETS.

Program Mentor Meeting – 4-H	@ 9 am
Program Mentor Meeting – ANR	@ 10 am
Program Mentor Meeting – FACS	@ 11 am
Relationship Mentor Meeting	@ 1 pm

❑ 30 minutes

❑ Online (Zoom) Session

❑ Focused on actively mentors, but open to all trained mentors
   o Peers sharing best practices
   o Developing a reciprocal network of mentors

Meeting Agenda
- Welcome
- Beg, borrow from each peers
- Tips and tricks - seasonal
- Wrap Up

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Program Mentors

- ✓ Provide basic program information
  - • Stress the importance of taking the initiative to learn material/content
  - • Identify curriculum and activities
  - • Stress the importance of building clientele
  - • Needs Assessment
- ✓ Connect to technical experts
  - • Identify trainings formal/informal
- ✓ Coordinate site visits
- ✓ Planning and Reporting Support
  - • Plan of work
  - • GA Counts
  - • Record Keeping (including EOO)
- ✓ Expanding on/clarifying extension trainings
- ✓ Explain professional organizations

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Program Mentor Site Visits May Include:

- Attend A&NR / FACS programs

- Observe a 4-H club meeting

- Advisory council meeting

- Farm tour/field day

- Planning meeting

- Awards program

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Relationship Mentors

✓ Personnel Management
- Supervising
  - Volunteers
  - Employees
- Intra-office relations
- Keeping Records

✓ Interacting with Community
- How to identify & sustain relationships with key stakeholders
  - Extension Leadership System
  - Community members that can help with fundraising
  - Who to rely on in a crisis
  - Record Keeping
- Interacting with Parents (if applicable)

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Relationship Site Visits May Include:

- Observe advisory board meeting
- Attend board of commissioners or board of education meeting
- Observe parent meeting
  - open house or
  - back to school meeting
- Visiting newspaper contacts
- Observe mentor supporting another program area event or program
  - Cooking program that includes
    - ANR: gardening practices and food production and master gardener connection
    - FACS: food safety
    - 4-H: teamwork, building life skills
- Assist with report/paperwork (staff activity report)
- Share record keeping strategies

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Mentor/Mentee Feedback

Feedback after each visit and quarterly is captured through a short online survey

Mentee/Mentor Survey

State Level Receives Results

District Receives Results
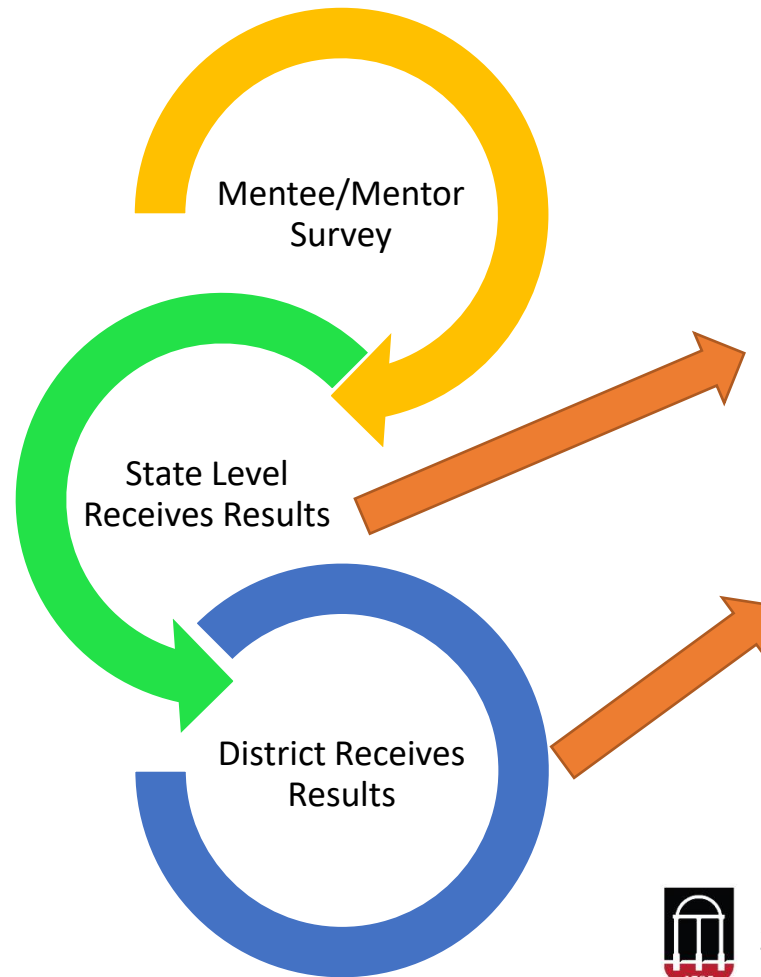
State uses results to inform training for mentors and revisions to mentor program

District uses results to inform mentee/mentor relationship and to provide feedback to mentor
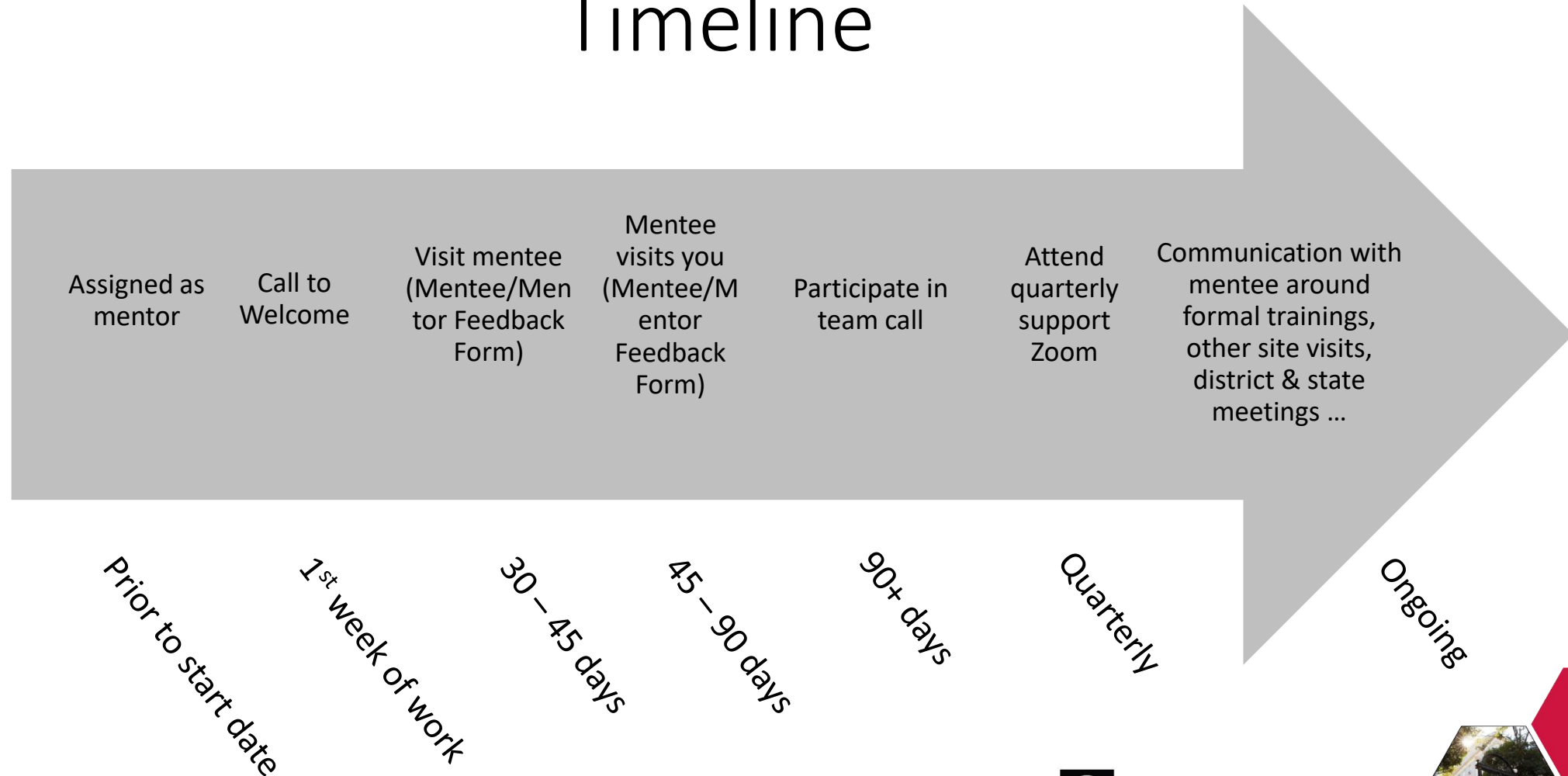
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Timeline

Assigned as mentor

Call to Welcome

Visit mentee (Mentee/Mentor Feedback Form)

Mentee visits you (Mentee/Mentor Feedback Form)

Participate in team call

Attend quarterly support Zoom

Communication with mentee around formal trainings, other site visits, district & state meetings …

Prior to start date

1st week of work

30 – 45 days

45 – 90 days

90+ days

Quarterly

Ongoing

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Program evaluation to understanding mentor relationships between new and seasoned agents.

1) Examine strengths of mentor relationships between new and seasoned agents

2) Identify areas to improve the mentoring process

3) Determine agents' attitudes toward mentor experience

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Methodology

- Qualitative program evaluation

- Respondents submitted online quarterly surveys and after-visit surveys

- Open-ended questions pertaining to their mentor experience.
  - 34 Program & Relationship Mentors (combined)
  - 20 mentees
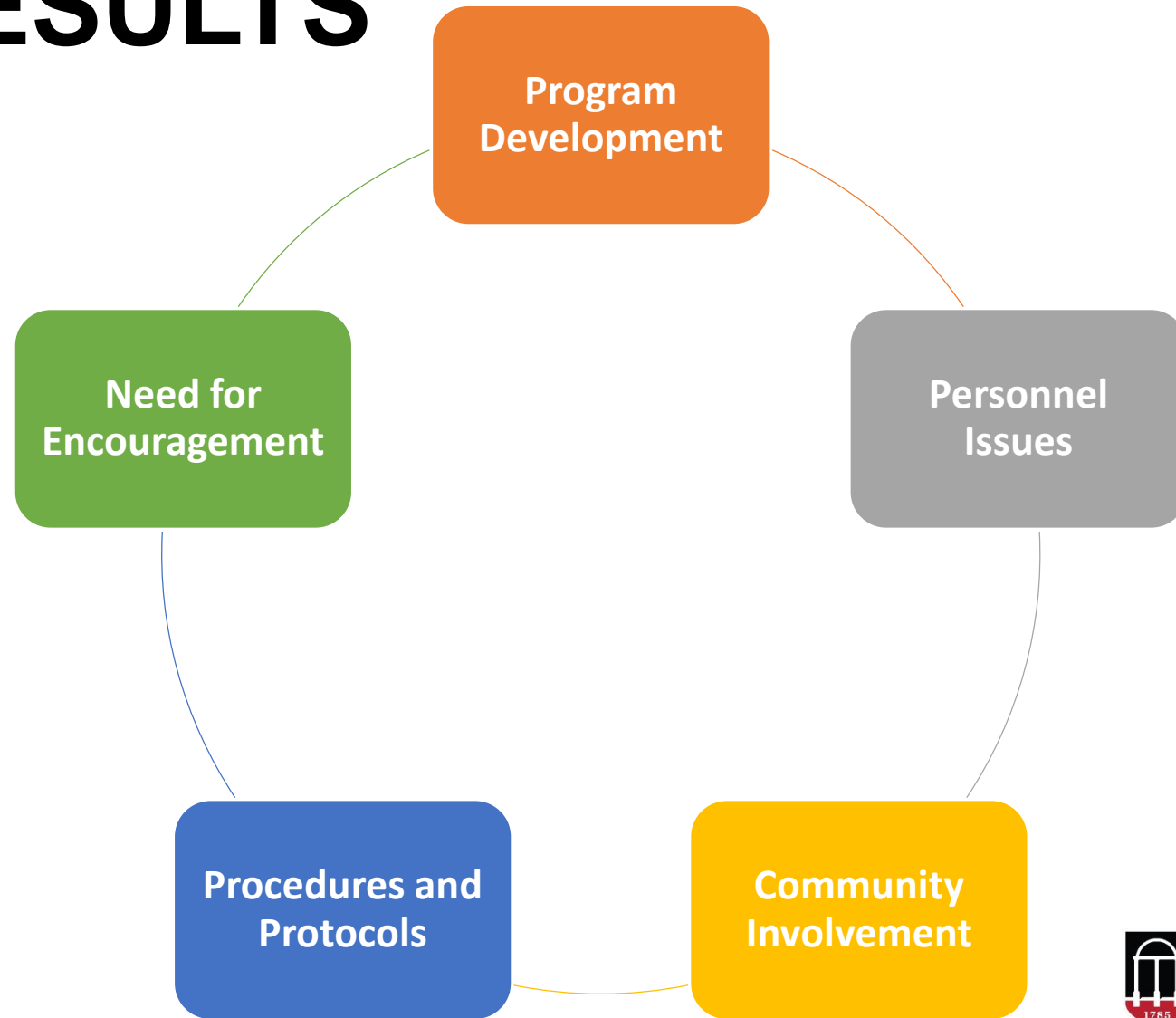
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Program Development Theme

Both mentors and mentees recognized program development as a priority need of a new agent.

"She gave me the grand tour of her office, which is great! I now have so many ideas for my own. She discussed the programming that her space allows for. We also discussed current needs, questions, and really all aspects of this position."

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Personnel Issues Theme

Many new agents find themselves in supervisory roles day one on the job, yet they have no experience in managing a staff or volunteers.

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Community Involvement Theme

Creating diverse mentor teams of two mentors allows the relationship mentor to specifically focus on the need for community engagement.

"[Mentor] was able to help me a lot with figuring out the most important people to meet with and talk too. Since our first meeting I've been able to reach out to more principals, attended a meeting and spoke with our commissioners, met the superintendent, and added more volunteers to the program."

(Franz et. al, 2009)

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Procedures and Protocols Theme

Mentees frequently noted mentors helping with procedures and protocols.

One critical event noted by a mentee in their critical reflection of mentor interaction:

> *"After my visit with [Mentor], I thoroughly understood what my plan of work was supposed to entail and I was motivated and encouraged to construct mine. [Mentor] was also very helpful in regards to the Public Service Promotion process. He provided thorough information of the process, and guided me in thinking of ways I can uniquely shape my career with UGA Extension according to my strengths, passions and career goals."*

(Franz et. al, 2009)

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Need for Encouragement Theme

Mentors consistently reported that their mentee's needed "encouragement."

One mentor said the goal in mentoring is to *"build confidence while establishing long-lasting connections."*

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Study Recommendations

- Continue the two-mentor support system.

  "[The Relationship Mentor] and I both met with [Mentee] together at her office for the first visit. I like having two mentors meet with the mentee the first time, because she was able to get two different perspectives simultaneously. She will still get individual time with us in our counties, but I think the joint visit for the first time was valuable."

- Year one program evaluation results were positive.

- Ongoing program evaluation needed to understand the longitudinal effects of this mentor program.
  - Follow-up with mentees and mentors 3 and 5 years after program could provide insight into long-term effects and impact.

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Future Research

- In order to understand the longitudinal effects of mentoring, it is recommended to have the new agent/mentee reflect on their mentor relationship at their five-year anniversary with Extension for longitudinal insight.

- To better understand employee attrition, conduct exit interviews with agents who leave and with the agents who choose to stay with the organization. The purpose of the study would be to understand how the mentor relationship influences agents' commitment to the organization.

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THANK YOU!

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