

Tips for Supervising Peer Leaders and Near Peers

1. Get to know your supervisee

- Find out who they are, take an interest, and show you care.
- Give them time to talk about their work and personal lives (if they want to share).
- Take notes to remember the names of people in their lives and their non-work interests/hobbies.
- Work to understand and respect the cultural differences that exist between you and them. (This is known as cultural humility.)
- In meetings, avoid jumping directly to work-related tasks.

2. Establish and maintain trust

- Create a safe, calm, and supportive environment for supervision.
- Set clear expectations of roles and responsibilities for your supervisee and yourself.
- Choose a supervision space that is convenient, comfortable, and private.
- Meet with them regularly and protect this time from cancellation or rescheduling.
- When conflicts arise, reschedule as soon as possible.
- If conflicts arise frequently, consider why. Ask yourself:
 - Is the meeting time inconvenient?
 - Is one of you overextended or having difficulty with time management?
 - Is there tension in your supervisor/supervisee relationship?

3. Communicate

- Provide relevant information, give and receive feedback, and answer questions.
- Communicate more often than you might think is necessary, especially with staff who are new to organizations or projects like yours.
- Ask open-ended questions that will stimulate conversation.
- Strive for understanding and show respect for different views and perspectives.
- Provide feedback from a place of care, support, and investment in each other's success.
- Give and receive feedback as coaching, not criticism.
- Answer questions. If you don't know the answer, commit to finding out and sharing what you learn.
- Remember that there is a power differential. Supervisees are not appropriate people to vent to.

4. Actively listen, encourage reflection, and provide support

- Listen to your supervisee's experiences, thoughts, and feelings about the work.
- Encourage them to reflect on the work to identify their strengths and opportunities for improvement.
- Help them develop new knowledge and skills.
- Seek to understand their work relationships, especially those that may be challenging.
- Provide support and guidance navigating challenging situations, if needed.
- Celebrate positive resolutions to challenges.
- Offer your perspective on work experiences, if necessary.
- Share stories from your career and how you got to where you are today, when appropriate.



5. Involve your supervisee in decision-making

- Review all project functions and explore ways your supervisee could be involved. Work together to identify the activities that are the best fit for them.
- Give them full control over some activities. Can they take the lead on creating an agenda or facilitating a meeting? Draft a budget for a community event? Deliver program content?
- Let them in on your decision-making process and share what information they need to consider when making decisions.

6. Give praise and share recognition

- Let your supervisee know when they have done something well.
- Provide written and spoken praise.
- Show gratitude with a note or small gifts (e.g., a coffee gift card), if allowable in your organization.
- Publicly celebrate them in front of their peers, in staff meetings, to your organizational leadership, and to funders.
- If your supervisee does something exceptional, consider writing a letter of recommendation that they can keep on file for future job or school applications and/or for human resources to include in their personnel file (if they have one).

7. Address mistakes privately and constructively

- Ask how they like to receive feedback, and follow those guidelines as often as possible.
- Provide timely feedback using these steps:
 - **Ask for permission.** Before you provide feedback, it's important that your supervisee has the mental and emotional capacity to receive it. Consider providing a written heads up that you want to discuss something with them so they have time to prepare and don't get defensive because they're caught off guard.
 - **Be specific.** Refer to specific work situations.
 - **Focus on behavior.** Give clear examples of the challenging behavior. Generalities can cause confusion or be perceived as personal attacks.
 - **Identify impact.** Explain what the impact of their behavior was.
- Connect feedback with opportunities for mentorship or professional development. Remind them that you provide feedback because you care about their success in this and future roles.
- Work together to identify what could be done differently next time.
- If their behavior violated expectations or agreements, explain this and the consequence.
- Even though providing feedback to a supervisee might be challenging, keep in mind that it builds their capacity to receive feedback and be a responsive and valuable team member.

8. Be consistent, fair, and reliable

- Aim to balance supervisee, project, and organizational needs.
- Apply consistent expectations across all supervisees.
- Follow through on what you say you will do. When you can't follow through, explain why.
- Ask for feedback about your own work so they can let you know if something isn't working or if you didn't follow through on something important.
- Be clear and re-emphasize from time to time what success looks like to you. People thrive on high expectations when they know what they are.

9. Model the behavior you expect

- Consider your organizational, project, and professional goals. Do you behave in a way that contributes to those goals? Does your behavior match the behavior you expect from supervisees?
- Set and maintain clear boundaries. Remember you are not a friend or a peer and shouldn't act in ways that confuse that professional boundary.
- If you make a mistake, apologize quickly and clearly, and make amends.

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