What is Mentoring?
NRCS mentoring provides employees with opportunities to develop new knowledge, skills and experiences. NRCS mentors aim to broaden employee experiences, assist in developing goals, and cultivate new opportunities.

How Does it Work?
NRCS employees are matched as mentors and protégés based on developmental goals, areas of expertise, and objectives for the relationship. The mentor shares his or her experiences and feedback with the protégé regarding technical knowledge, agency background and relationships, and tips for success.

The mentor and protégé then work together over the course of one year to develop strategies for achieving mutually agreed upon goals.

Characteristics of a Mentor
Any current NRCS employee who possesses the following characteristics:
• Able to serve as a role model and resource person for newer employees.
• Possesses a high degree of proficiency and initiative in their own career patterns.
• Committed to assist and advise new employees to help him/her achieve their full potential.
• Is patient and cooperative when working with others.
• Able to devote time for discussions and actively listens.
• Able to proactively provide constructive critique to employees on career and personal issues which could impede career advancement.
• Tactful, sensitive, and diplomatic in order to work with others who may be of a different age group, background or culture.

Characteristics of a Protégé
Any new or current NRCS employee who possesses the following characteristics:
• Committed to expanding their capabilities.
• Open and receptive to new ways of learning and trying new ideas.
• Able to accept feedback and act upon it.
• Willing to apply learning back on the job.
• Focused on achieving desired business results.
• Able to communicate well and work cooperatively with others.
• Knows when to ask for help.
• Possesses a sense of personal responsibility and commitment.
• Makes the time to meet on a regular basis.

Time Commitment
The Iowa NRCS mentoring program lasts for one year. The typical mentoring relationship takes about 5% of the participant’s time.

Mentors and protégés will work together to set expectations, goals, frequency and determine how and when they will meet.

Become a Mentor or Protégé
To apply to become a mentor or protégé, use the online application at www.eservices.usda.gov/usdamentoring or talk to your supervisor.

Program Benefits
Mentors have the opportunity to give back and pass on insights and lessons learned. Mentors also may gain fresh perspectives from protégés.

Protégés are able to further their professional development by building upon mentoring advice to expand technical knowledge, expertise, and interpersonal skills.

Mentors and protégés may develop strong and lasting relationships that are built on trust and mutual respect.

The mentoring program also benefits NRCS by facilitating institutional knowledge transfer, overall enhancement of employee skills, increased employee retention and attraction of top talent to the agency.