

Friends Partnership Mentoring Program

Overview and Application



Purpose	<p>The purpose of the Friends mentoring program is to foster active, vibrant, and effective Friends organizations. The goal is to help a Friends organization and their Service site partner formulate a clear path forward so that they may work efficiently toward their mutual goals. Along the way, they will enhance understanding of these mutual goals, review the Friends' and Service's capacity to pursue the goals, and make plans to increase the capacity of the partners, if necessary.</p>
Overview	<p>The Friends Partnership Mentoring Program is a peer-based, face-to-face coaching opportunity to build and enhance the partnership between a Friends organization and the Service site and to strengthen both organizations to enable them to accomplish their mutual goals. A mentor relationship involves a specially trained pair of mentors (a Service employee and a Friends member), the Friends board of directors/leaders, and key Service employees from the requesting Service site.</p>
Mentoring Priority Areas	<p>Mentoring is designed to address four priority areas for Friends partnerships:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><i>The Organization:</i> Starting up or sustaining an existing nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Examples may include working through organizational start-up processes, obtaining 501(c)(3) status, drafting mission/vision statements and by-laws, increasing board skills and effectiveness, attracting members or volunteers as well as board members with the appropriate skill sets to lead the organization, and establishing administrative processes and financial operations.<i>The Partnership:</i> Developing or strengthening the partnership. Examples may include defining roles and responsibilities, collaborating as partners to develop plans (project, annual, work plans, etc.), improving meeting effectiveness, enhancing communications, celebrating accomplishments, and working through organizational changes, including changes in Service staff and Friends leadership.<i>Building Capacity:</i> Investing in the growth of your organization or partnership. Examples may include increasing programming, diversifying revenue sources (e.g., applying for grants, developing a nature store, recruiting and sustaining donors), hiring staff, expanding active membership, expanding community partnerships, and engaging in a Service initiative such as the Urban Wildlife Conservation Program.<i>Other:</i> Don't see your situation fitting into any of the above three areas? Please provide an explanation on the application or call your regional Friends coordinator to discuss. <p>Using the above four priority areas, the Friends leaders, the Service site staff, and the mentors will discuss and agree upon the major focus for the mentor visit. Mentoring can reveal exciting opportunities and identify ways to build capacity to pursue these opportunities. It can also focus on an anticipated challenge or on the changes experienced as an organization progresses through normal life cycles.</p>

A Quick Look: Applying for the Mentoring Program

1. Go to this website for more information: <https://www.fws.gov/refuges/friends/training.html>
2. Read, complete, and sign this Application Form.
3. Submit completed application to FriendsMentoring@fws.gov .
4. National Friends coordinator forwards application to appropriate regional coordinator.
5. Regional Friends coordinator reviews application and ranks it among other applications.
6. If your application is selected, the regional coordinator recruits appropriate mentors and introduces you to them.
7. The Friends organization and Service Project Leader and Service Liaison complete the Visit Prep Form and send it to the mentor team in preparation for the first call with them.
8. Mentor team schedules and leads the first call.
9. The rest is preparation for the visit—phone calls, emails, setting a date, reviewing the mentors' proposed agenda, and gearing up for a special experience.

Process and Expectations

The Friends Partnership Mentoring Program is funded jointly by the Refuge System headquarters and the regional offices at very little expense to the individual Service site or partnership being mentored. When a partnership is chosen for mentoring, the mentor team is carefully selected to complement the purpose for which mentoring was requested. The mentors work directly with the Service Project Leader/Service Liaison and key Friends leaders to obtain additional information. This is accomplished through a process that involves a phone conference and a standard set of questions (Prep Form questions provided in advance). Afterward, a site visit will be scheduled when all can participate (typically over two and one-half days), and mentors will draft a meeting agenda.

We have found that a fully successful mentoring experience requires 1) the Service Project Leader/Service Liaison and key board members/Friends leaders being fully engaged in planning for and communicating about the mentor visit and 2) key Service staff, the board of directors, and other Friends leaders being available for and participating in the mentoring site visit.

During the visit, the mentor team will assist the partnership in addressing and working on the priorities identified through the preparation process. The site visit will result in a written narrative by the mentors, a draft of which will be provided to the partnership within a month following the site visit. The narrative will summarize the mentoring session, including conclusions and commitments made by the participants. The mentors will follow up with the participants through scheduled conference calls at 1, 3, 6, and 12 months after mentoring.

About the Mentors

Mentors are trained Friends and Service staff who have such a strong interest and commitment to supporting Friends partnerships that they volunteer their time to do so. They have diverse experiences working with Friends partnerships and have received specialized mentor training. There are approximately 20 mentors serving on a nationwide basis, and they work in pairs consisting of one Friends member and one Service employee. The pair, once formed, is supported by the regional coordinator from the region in which the application was generated.

Application

Who May Apply

Any U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Friends organization, in cooperation with their Service site, may apply to the mentoring program. Prior to applying, the Service Project Leader/Service Liaison and the Friends board of directors must meet to discuss the benefits of engaging in the mentoring program. If everyone agrees to submit an application, it must contain signatures of both a Friends leader (normally the president or board chair) and the Service Project Leader. If both signatures are not currently attainable, please submit an application with an explanation.

Application Timelines

There are two application cycles for the mentoring program each year:

- Spring Cycle applications due March 31, with mentoring process taking place between May and October.
- Fall Cycle applications due October 31, with mentoring process taking place between December and March.

Application Options

Obtain More Information: Talk to someone about the program and/or arrange for a regional coordinator or mentor to join your next board meeting by phone to provide an overview of the program and answer questions.

Call:

Pacific Northwest Region 1, Charlie Pelizza, 503-231-6176

Southwest Region 2, Nancy Brown, 713-524-7330 ext. 207

Midwest Region 3, Megan Wandag, 612-713-5463

Southeast Region 4, Sallie Gentry, 404-679-7293

Northeast Region 5, Deborah Long, 413-253-8568

Mountain Prairie Region 6, Melvie Uhland, 303-236-4395

Alaska Region 7, Debbie Steen, 907-786-3665

Southwest Region 8, Derek Carr, 916-414-6681

Fisheries, Richard Christian, 703-358-1704

Submit an Application : Complete and submit the application on the following pages.

Friends Mentoring Application

To apply for the mentoring program, please respond to the following five questions and obtain the required signatures. Submission instructions are at the end of the application.

1. What do you hope mentoring will accomplish for you, your organization, and/or your partnership?

2. Review the mentoring priority areas on page 1 of this application with your board and Service Project Leader/Friends Liaison. Identify those for which you are seeking mentoring and provide a detailed description of the issues or opportunities you wish to address. If these are in more than one area, please provide in priority order. If the categories provided do not address your needs, please provide a detailed explanation of your needs.

3. It would be helpful to know if your board has completed a nonprofit life cycle stage assessment of any kind within the past two years. If you have, what were the results? (See Life Cycle Fact Sheet for more information.)

4. It would also be helpful to know if your board has received or engaged in any organizational or partnership consulting services in the past year. This could include a strategic planning process by a consultant. If yes, please describe, including any outcomes.

5. Is there anything else you feel is important to share?

Required Signatures

I have completed/reviewed this Friends Mentoring Program application and I support this effort at:

(Name of Service site)

Name/Title of Friends Leader	Signature	Date
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Name of Project Leader	Signature	Date
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Submitting completed application

Send by postal mail to:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Joanna Webb
5275 Leesburg Pike
MS: NWRS
Falls Church, VA 22041-3803

Thank you for applying to the Friends Partnership Mentoring Program!

Send by email: FriendsMentoring@fws.gov

Questions? Contact Joanna Webb at 703-358-2392 or email Joanna_Webb@fws.gov