



 **NAWO**
MENTEE
GUIDE

2026





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Welcome to the 2026 NAWO Mentoring Program.

We are delighted to have you involved as a mentee. By choosing to participate, you are investing time and intention into your development, confidence and career progression within operations.

The NAWO Mentoring Program is designed to support women working in operations through meaningful, structured mentoring relationships. It provides space to reflect, learn, ask questions, and explore what's next - whether that's building confidence in your current role, navigating challenges, or gaining clarity on future career pathways.

This guide has been created to support you throughout the program. It outlines what mentoring at NAWO looks like, what you can expect from the experience, and how to make the most of your mentoring relationship. It also explains the role you play as a mentee - because effective mentoring is a shared responsibility.

Mentoring is not about having all the answers. It's about curiosity, reflection, and showing up with honesty and openness. Many mentees are new to mentoring and may feel unsure at the start - this is completely normal. Your mentor is there to support your thinking and growth, not to judge or direct you.

By participating in the program, you are also contributing to NAWO's broader purpose of advancing gender balance in operations across Australia. Your experiences, insights and engagement help strengthen inclusive leadership, visibility and pathways for others.

We encourage you to approach this experience with intention, take ownership of your learning journey, and use the resources and support available to you.

We're glad you're here and look forward to supporting you throughout the year.



I cannot even explain in words how beneficial the NAWO mentoring has been for me. I have been more concentrated on my projects and less a slave to emails, I use strategies to grow my teams skills not take on extra work, I have conversations easily that I once would have procrastinated on, I have self-belief and confidence and set boundaries

NAWO MENTEE



Why mentoring matters at NAWO

Mentoring plays a key role in how NAWO supports individuals, organisations and the broader operations community. It creates space for reflection, learning and connection - enabling people to share experience, build confidence and navigate career decisions with greater clarity.

For many participants, mentoring provides access to perspectives and conversations that may not always be available in day-to-day roles. It supports learning through lived experience and helps build capability, clarity and professional networks across industries where gender balance remains a priority.

Program Impact

The NAWO Mentoring Program supports personal and professional development while contributing to NAWO's broader purpose of advancing gender balance in operations.

Through structured mentoring relationships, the program:

- Builds confidence, clarity and capability
- Creates safe, inclusive spaces for reflection and conversation
- Increases visibility of diverse career pathways and leadership styles
- Strengthens cross-industry connections and networks
- Supports inclusive leadership practices across operational environments

By participating as a mentee, you are investing in your own development while contributing to a collective effort to support more women to thrive and progress in operational roles across Australia.



For **mentees**, the program builds confidence, clarifies career goals, and expands networks, empowering emerging leaders to thrive in operational roles.

For **mentors**, it's an opportunity to give back, grow inclusive leadership capabilities, and gain fresh perspectives from rising talent across multiple industries.



What success looks like

Success can look different for everyone. You will have your own personal goals for the mentoring program, and we encourage you to reflect on these early and share them with your Mentor to help guide your mentoring conversations.

Examples of the types of success we often see through the program include:

Success for you as the Mentee

- Greater capability in navigating operational environments
- Clarity around career direction and next steps
- Practical strategies for development
- Expanded professional and industry networks
- A safe, supportive space to explore challenges and decisions

Success for Mentors

- A sense of contribution to the development and visibility of women in operations
- Opportunities to strengthen coaching and inclusive leadership capabilities
- Insight into emerging challenges, perspectives and aspirations across the industry
- Connection to a wider community of mentors and allies

Success for the Program

- Consistent and active participation throughout the program
- Development outcomes reflected in mentee feedback
- Strong mentor and mentee satisfaction
- Ongoing relationships and informal mentoring beyond the program



This is an opportunity to develop in ways that are meaningful to you and your organisation and grow your cross industry network



Where to get support

You are not expected to navigate the mentoring program on your own. Support is available throughout the program to help you stay on track and get the most from your experience.



NAWO Mentoring Team

The NAWO Mentoring Team is your first point of contact for any questions or concerns about the program. They can support you with matching queries, changes in circumstances, or guidance if challenges arise during the mentoring relationship.

For support, guidance, concerns or questions at any stage contact: mentoring@nawo.org.au

Mentoring Resources Hub

The Resources Hub includes templates, guides, and practical tools to support your mentoring journey. These resources are designed to help you prepare for sessions, reflect on progress, and manage your development goals.

 [Mentoring Resources Hub](#)

Surveys and Check-ins

Regular check-ins and surveys provide an opportunity to reflect on your experience and share feedback with NAWO. These touchpoints also help NAWO ensure participants are supported and identify where additional assistance may be helpful.

 [Post Session Check-In Form](#)

Your Mentor or Circle

Your mentor or mentoring circle can also be a valuable source of support. Open, respectful communication is encouraged, particularly if expectations need clarifying or priorities shift over time.

If at any point you feel unsure, stuck, or concerned, reaching out early is encouraged. Support is available to help ensure a positive and productive mentoring experience for everyone involved.



Program Details

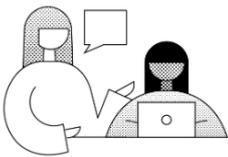
Mentoring Formats

As part of the mentoring program, you may be matched into either a one-to-one (1:1) mentoring relationship or a mentoring circle. Both formats are intentional and valuable. One is not “better” than the other - they simply offer different learning experiences.

Matching is done with care, based on experience, goals, availability, and overall program fit, with the aim of creating the strongest learning outcomes for everyone involved.

What is 1:1 Mentoring?

One-to-one mentoring pairs you with a single mentor. Sessions are focused on your individual goals, experiences, and development needs.



Benefits of 1:1 mentoring include:

- Personalised guidance tailored to your specific goals
- Space to explore sensitive or complex topics in confidence
- A strong, focused mentoring relationship
- Flexibility to go deep on individual challenges or opportunities



What is a Mentoring Circle?

A mentoring circle brings together a small group of mentees with one mentor. Sessions are designed to encourage shared learning, discussion, and reflection.

Benefits of mentoring circles include:

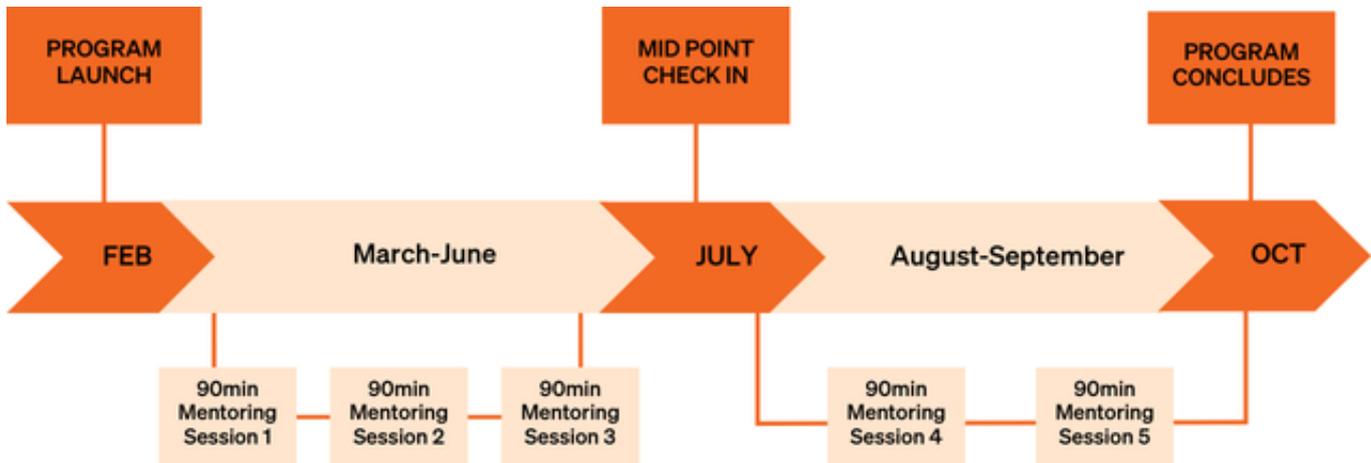
- Learning from multiple perspectives, not just one
- Exposure to a broader range of experiences, industries, and career pathways
- Peer support and a sense of shared journey
- Collaborative problem-solving and idea sharing
- Opportunity to build a strong professional network alongside your mentor relationship
- Development of group skills such as listening, reflection, feedback, and contribution

Many mentees report that hearing others' questions and experiences helps them clarify their own thinking and identify insights they may not have reached alone.



Timeframes

- Duration: February to October 2026
- Time commitment: 2-3 hours per month



Program Snapshot

Format	Either 1:1 Mentoring or Mentoring Circles
Duration	February - October 2026
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentee Onboarding Session (1 hour) • Program Launch (1 hour) • 5+ Mentoring sessions (up to 90 mins each) • Mid program event • End-of-program reflection
Confidentiality	All conversations remain private and respectful
NAWO Check-Ins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Onboarding survey (Mentees only) • Mid-program survey • End-of-program survey • Short online check-in for completion after every session
Support options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NAWO Mentoring Team • Mentoring Resource Hub



Being a NAWO Mentee

What we ask of our Mentees

The success of the NAWO Mentoring Program relies on shared commitment from both mentors and mentees. As a mentee, you play an active role in shaping the experience and outcomes of the program.

The points below are intended to guide you in making the most of your mentoring journey. Whether you are part of a one-to-one mentoring partnership or a mentoring circle, the same principles apply.

1. Participation, Communication and Engagement

Effective mentoring is supported by consistency, open communication and active engagement.

Throughout the program, mentees are encouraged to:

- Commit to participating for the full duration of the program
- Attend scheduled mentoring sessions and communicate early if changes are needed
- Engage openly, respectfully and professionally in mentoring conversations
- Take the lead in initiating contact and driving their learning journey

Clear communication and engagement help build trust and support meaningful mentoring relationships.

2. Planning and Preparation

Preparation helps create focused and productive mentoring conversations. Mentees are encouraged to use the Mentee Development Plan as a working document throughout the program to support reflection, goal setting and follow-through.

The Development Plan is designed to be an ongoing reference point - something you return to before sessions, update as your thinking evolves, and use to capture actions and learning between conversations.

- To support your preparation, you may find it helpful to:
- Reflect on goals, challenges and areas for development ahead of sessions
- Use the Development Plan to capture priorities, growth areas and actions as they emerge
- Bring topics, questions or reflections from the Development Plan into mentoring conversations
- Use NAWO tools and templates, including the Session Planner, where helpful
- Approach conversations with openness to feedback, reflection and learning

Mentoring conversations are often most valuable when they are intentional and grounded in reflection, rather than reactive. Using the Development Plan as a shared reference can help maintain focus, continuity and momentum across the program.



3. Active Ownership of Your Development

Mentoring works best as an active partnership. As a mentee, you are supported to:

- Take ownership of your goals, decisions and actions
- Use mentoring conversations to explore options and perspectives
- Apply insights and strategies between sessions
- Reflect on progress and adjust goals as your thinking evolves

Your mentor will support and challenge your thinking, while you remain responsible for your development.

4. Check-ins and Feedback

To support the quality and ongoing improvement of the program, mentees are invited to complete brief check-ins throughout the program.

The check-ins are designed to be quick and easy, and include:

- Short session reflections following mentoring sessions
- Program check-ins at key points
- End-of-program feedback

These help NAWO understand participant experience, identify support needs early, and continue to strengthen the mentoring program.

We recommend saving the following session check-in form, as the same link will be used to complete a short check-in after each mentoring session.

 [Post session Check-In form](#)

5. Common Courtesies

Respectful, timely communication is essential to mentoring. All participants are expected to always engage professionally and courteously.

Mentees are responsible for staying engaged and responding to their mentor in a timely way. Mentors volunteer their time and should not need to chase unanswered messages. Going missing or disengaging without communication is not acceptable.

If circumstances change or challenges arise, let the other person know. There is no judgement. Open communication allows the mentoring relationship to adapt and continue positively.

In short: respond, stay connected, be respectful, and keep communication open.



Member Guidelines

To support a safe, inclusive and enjoyable mentoring experience, we've brought together a few helpful guides below. They explain how the program runs, how we look after one another, and where support is available if needed.

NAWO Community Code

Sets out how we engage with one another across the NAWO community, helping to create respectful, inclusive and safe spaces for everyone involved.

 [View NAWO Community Code](#)

Respectful Workplace Behaviour Policy & Grievance Procedure

Explains how NAWO supports respectful behaviour and what to do if concerns arise, including the pathways available for raising and resolving issues.

 [View Policy & Procedure](#)

NAWO Mentoring Program – Terms & Conditions (2026)

Outlines how the mentoring program operates, including timeframes, participation guidelines and how support is provided throughout the program.

 [View Terms & Conditions](#)



Getting Started

Onboarding Sessions

Before your mentoring sessions begin, you are encouraged to attend or review the Mentee Onboarding Session and the Program Launch Session. These sessions outline the mentee role, explain how the program will run, and explore what makes an effective mentoring relationship. Recordings and presentation materials will be available on the 2026 Mentoring Resources Hub.

Your Mentoring Match

Once matching is complete, NAWO will email you the details of your mentor or mentoring circle. Matches are made with care, considering experience, development goals, availability and overall program fit. Depending on the program format, your match may be one-to-one or circle based.

It's common for this stage to bring a mix of excitement and uncertainty - for both mentees and mentors. For many mentees, this is their first experience of formal mentoring. Feeling unsure, nervous, or questioning how the relationship will work is completely normal. Some mentors may feel the same.

A thoughtful start helps build confidence on both sides and sets the tone for a strong and productive mentoring relationship.

First contact and early conversations

As a mentee, you are encouraged to take the lead in initiating contact with your mentor. This is an important part of owning your learning journey.

Your mentor will also have been notified of the match by NAWO and will be expecting to hear from you. A simple email is all that's needed to start the conversation and begin organising your first session.

In your initial message, you may wish to include:

- A brief introduction about yourself
- What you're hoping to gain from the mentoring partnership
- Your preferred contact details (email, phone, WhatsApp or similar)

This first connection is an opportunity to begin building rapport and agree on a suitable time for your first mentoring session. Your first session should ideally take place within four weeks of the program launch on 17 February.



Preparing for your first session

Before your first mentoring session, you will need to complete your Development Plan and send it to your mentor. This gives your mentor time to familiarise themselves with your goals, focus areas and what you're hoping to explore through mentoring.

You may also find it helpful to:

- Reflect on what has prompted you to join the program
- Consider what feels most important to focus on early
- Note any questions or topics you'd like to discuss in the first session

Preparation doesn't need to be extensive or perfect. The goal is simply to arrive ready for an open, constructive conversation and to begin building a shared foundation for the mentoring relationship.

Self-awareness and reflection

Developing self-awareness is a key part of mentoring. The Development Plan helps you reflect on why you joined the program, what you want to develop, and how you would like to grow.

Regular reflection can help you clarify priorities, recognise strengths and development areas, and notice progress over time. You may wish to revisit your reflections throughout the program to see how your thinking evolves.

Capturing goals, actions and learning

The Development Plan helps you capture your goals, actions between sessions, and key insights from mentoring conversations. Using it regularly turns reflection into action and provides a useful reference for session preparation, progress review, and end-of-program reflection.

 [Access the Development Plan](#)



Making Mentoring Count

What It Means to Be a Mentee

Being a mentee in the NAWO Mentoring Program is about approaching the relationship with openness, intention and curiosity. Mentoring is a shared, voluntary partnership built on mutual respect and a genuine commitment to learning and growth.

Mindset and readiness

Mentors choose to participate in the program. They have offered their time and experience because they want to support others and contribute to growth across the operations community.

It is common for mentees to experience self-doubt or imposter syndrome - particularly when working with someone more senior, or when unsure how mentoring will add value at a later career stage. These thoughts are natural, but they can create unnecessary hesitation.

Mentoring works best when mentees recognise that both parties have chosen to be there. The relationship is mutual, consensual and focused on development. Letting go of self-doubt helps create space for more open, productive conversations.

Commitment, presence and respect for time

Mentoring relies on shared respect for time and commitment. When sessions are scheduled, being present and prepared helps build trust and shows care for the relationship.

At the same time, flexibility and understanding are important. Circumstances can change for both mentors and mentees. Open communication and early notice support respectful adjustments when needed.

Mentoring is most effective when:

- Sessions are scheduled at times that are realistic and sustainable
- Commitments are honoured wherever possible
- Communication is clear if plans need to change

The mentoring relationship is a partnership - it works best when responsibility is shared.



Curiosity and openness

Curiosity is one of the most valuable qualities a mentee can bring to mentoring. Each mentor brings their own style, experience and way of thinking.

Mentees are encouraged to:

- Ask questions, even if they feel uncertain or “outside the box”
- Explore different perspectives and approaches
- Be open to ideas that may challenge existing thinking

Often, the most meaningful insights come from unexpected questions or conversations that unfold naturally over time.

Scope and focus

Mentoring supports professional development and growth within a work and career context. While insights gained through mentoring may also influence communication, confidence or relationships beyond work, the primary focus remains career development and capability-building.

Maintaining this focus helps ensure mentoring conversations remain constructive, purposeful and aligned with development goals.



Working with your Mentor

Your mentor's role is to support your development by sharing experience, asking thoughtful questions and creating space for reflection and learning. The mentoring relationship is built on trust, respect and open conversation.

How your mentor supports your development

Your mentor may support you by:

- Listening and helping you explore challenges, opportunities and decisions
- Sharing insights and perspectives from their own experience
- Asking questions that encourage reflection, clarity and problem-solving
- Offering constructive feedback and encouragement
- Supporting you to identify actions and next steps

Guiding, not directing

Mentoring at NAWO is about guidance rather than instruction. Your mentor is not there to tell you what to do or make decisions on your behalf. Instead, they will help you think through options, challenge assumptions and build confidence in your own judgement.

You remain responsible for your goals, decisions and actions, with your mentor acting as a sounding board and source of perspective.

Boundaries and scope

Mentoring focuses on development, learning and confidence-building. It is not a substitute for management, performance review, counselling or professional advice.

Your mentor will:

- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries
- Respect confidentiality
- Stay within the scope of mentoring

If topics arise that sit outside the mentoring scope, your mentor may encourage you to seek support through appropriate workplace or professional channels or connect with the NAWO Mentoring Team for guidance.



Events and Connection

Why attend NAWO events?

NAWO events are an important extension of the mentoring experience. They provide opportunities to learn, connect and build relationships beyond your mentoring partnership, while gaining insight into the experiences of others working across operations.

Attending events can help you:

- Expand your professional network across industries and career stages
- Learn from lived experience and practical examples
- Increase visibility and confidence within the NAWO community
- Reinforce learning from mentoring conversations through broader perspectives

Events also support NAWO's purpose of strengthening connection, capability and gender balance across operations.

Suggested participation

You are encouraged to participate in NAWO events throughout the program, in ways that suit your availability, location and interests. This may include a mix of:

- In-person events and site visits
- Online events, webinars and panel discussions
- State-based or national sessions

Many mentees find that attending at least two NAWO events during the program helps deepen their learning and connection to the wider community. Your mentor may also suggest events that align with your development goals or interests.

Career Club and other opportunities

Career Club sessions and other NAWO initiatives offer additional ways to build skills, confidence and insight into career pathways in operations. These sessions often focus on practical topics such as career planning, visibility, leadership and navigating change.

You may choose to attend these sessions independently or discuss them with your mentor as part of your development planning. They can provide useful prompts for mentoring conversations and support continued learning beyond individual sessions.

Staying connected to NAWO events and opportunities helps you make the most of the mentoring program and strengthens your sense of belonging within the operations community.

NAWO online and in-person events

Mentoring is enhanced through connection, shared experience and further development. We encourage mentors and mentees to attend at least two NAWO events each year to broaden networks, gain new perspectives and continue learning together.

NAWO offers a mix of in-person and online events, making it easy to stay connected in a way that suits your schedule and respective locations. The knowledge gained can enhance your mentoring sessions.

National Webinars and Deep Dives

Our webinars focus on topics to inspire action, whether for your career or your organisation's approach to gender balance. Conversations with inspiring people from the NAWO network offer insights into current issues and reflections on the career journeys of senior women in operations.

In Person events and site tours

Our teams design and facilitate in-person events that give members the opportunity to forge meaningful connections across industries and disciplines in operations. Activities include social gatherings, organised walk-and-talks or more formal events. If you are in operations you love a site tour. Our NAWO volunteers work with member companies to organise site tours, often accompanied with a chance to connect.

Career Club sessions

Career Club is our monthly online session designed specifically for women seeking to advance their operational careers. Whether you're looking to refine leadership skills, master networking, or navigate workplace challenges, our sessions provide the insights and strategies you need to thrive.

Get involved!

New events are added every week.

Scan the QR Code to find out what's coming up, or visit nawo.org.au/whats-on



Join NAWO online

Wherever you are, join an upcoming online session to build your skills, connect with others, and help drive gender balance in operations.

Nine Dial Deep Dives

FIRST THURSDAY OF
EACH MONTH

NAWO's Nine Dials for Gender Balance outline the areas we know can 'turn the dial' on gender balance in operations. Each month we'll be exploring a Dial in detail, starting with a Deep Dive session. These online events will focus on what organisations can do to 'turn up' the dial, and how NAWO can support.

Career Club

THIRD THURSDAY OF
EACH MONTH

Career Club is our monthly online session designed specifically for women seeking to advance their operational careers. Whether you're looking to refine leadership skills, master networking, or navigate workplace challenges, our sessions provide the insights and strategies you need to thrive.

National Webinars

FOURTH THURSDAY OF
EACH MONTH

Our webinars focus on topics to inspire action, whether for your career or your organisation's approach to gender balance. Conversations with inspiring people from the NAWO network offer insights into current issues and reflections on the career journeys of senior women in operations.

All sessions start at 12:30PM AEST/AEDT (Melb/Syd time), and run for 30-60 minutes. NAWO Members have access to recordings and summaries of all online events through our Member Portal.

Get involved

Scan the QR Code to see what's coming up and register, or visit nawo.org.au/whats-on

