

Data Science Accelerator - Guidance for Mentors

Background

- The [Data Science Accelerator](#) has so far supported over 150 aspiring data scientists to develop their skills, helping to increase data science capability across the public sector.
- Mentors play a crucial role in this process by supporting Accelerator participants as they work on a data science project over the course of the three month programme.
- We now have six regional hubs (London, Sheffield, Newcastle, Newport, Taunton, Manchester)
- This is our 14th cohort of the programme
- Key dates:
 - Induction - 04 April ([Government Digital Service](#), London)
 - Weekly sessions - usually every Thursday from 11 April to 27 June (at your local hub)
 - Graduation - 04 July ([Government Digital Service](#), London)

What are the requirements to be a mentor?

- You must be working in an analytical role in your organisation. An SEO level position or higher is expected.
- You should have experience of working on projects that are intensely data-driven.
- You should have experience of applied statistics / machine learning to solve business problems.
- You should understand how to apply (and ideally be experienced in) Agile approaches to running projects. This focuses on having a mindset of iterating quickly, learning from failure and delivering a working output early for feedback.
- You must be able to code using more than one language and still be actively coding. Ideally this should be using open-source options like R and Python.
- You should have experience in a leadership role either on technical projects or as a line manager of technical staff.
- Ideally, you should have had training on active listening / [coaching](#).

The role of the mentor

- You provide one to one support for a participant on the Data Science Accelerator programme, advising them on suitable ways to approach their project.
- Provide technical advice where necessary and help to remove blockers e.g. access to data, downloading software
- Be available one day a week (usually the day when your local hub meets) over the course of the programme
- Typically, you might spend 1-3 hours per week giving mentoring help; for most of the day at the hub you will be able to do your own work - you're just available if any participants want help.

- Your mentee should let you know if they will be late or can't attend, so you can make arrangements to catch up with them
- You should agree when you'll be able to respond to questions from your mentee e.g. on non-Accelerator days
- You're there to provide support and advice, but they need to come up with the ideas and shape the project. Coach them to come up with the right answers themselves, and then support them to deliver

What do you get out of it?

- It's a great chance for you to develop your coaching and leadership skills and help create innovative data science solutions to interesting problems.
- As well as building your network you will expand your knowledge of what is going on in data science across government.
- You'll also gain evidence for interviews and performance reviews.

Key responsibilities

- Agree with Programme Lead which project and participant you will support, and contact your mentee to:
 - Welcome them to the programme
 - Make sure they're getting their data ready
 - Make sure their line manager understands the commitment they've made
- In the first couple of weeks:
 - Have a project brainstorming session at start
 - Define required learning, timeline, milestones, objectives and pitfalls (see mentoring contract)
 - Develop individual project plans
- In the last week, before the graduation:
 - Mentors should review the mentee's work:
 - Mentee to demo their work to their mentor
 - Talk about next steps for the project
 - Talk about next steps for the mentee skills/career wise
 - Make sure they're ready to present their work at the graduation

To apply - please email data-science-accelerator@digital.cabinet-office.gov.uk.