

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
GUIDELINES  
FOR  
CREATING SUCCESSFUL  
MENTORING PARTNERSHIPS**



**LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL**

## **FOREWORD**

This Guide, *Creating Successful Mentoring Partnerships*, provides information to U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) employees who are interested in establishing a mentoring relationship, either as a mentor or a protégé. Mentoring partnerships are a means to keep people in an organization in a continual state of learning. The process can unlock underutilized talent; encourage responsibility for one's own career growth, and nurture flexibility and adaptability in the midst of a chaotic environment. By taking a time-tested resource and applying it to the challenges of today's workplace, employees will be better positioned to deal with changes in their work and personal lives.

This Guide is designed to provide practical information for starting or continuing a mentoring partnership. We hope you find this information useful as you consider entering into a mentoring partnership or renewing an existing one.

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# Guidelines for Mentoring Programs

## What is mentoring?

Mentoring is an effective way to provide professional development and to enhance learning in the workplace. The mentoring relationship is a special relationship built on trust, encouragement, and targeted development. A mentor is a teacher, coach, and advisor who provide guidance and opportunities for learning and professional growth to another employee. By participating in a mentor/protégé relationship, mentors develop valuable skills that can further their personal and professional development as well. The relationship between mentor and protégé requires honesty, openness, commitment, and effort by both individuals.

A successful mentoring relationship benefits those involved through increased confidence and a sense of direction. The relationship provides a risk-free learning environment that offers career guidance. Mentoring relationships can develop between individuals within a DOJ Component, between individuals in two different Components, or between employees and non-DOJ Components. A mentor holds a higher position and is usually outside the employee's chain of command. They provide ongoing support, advice and career direction.. Training should be provided to give mentors and protégés guidance and the tools they need to engage in successful mentoring relationships.

In a mentoring relationship, mentor and protégé:

- Identify objectives, goals, and developmental needs.
- Define and establish a plan to accomplish protégé goals.
- Meet regularly in person or via phone or e-mail to review and evaluate progress.

### **Mentoring is NOT:**

- Casual advice.
- Necessarily for everyone.
- On-the-job training.
- A guarantee for a promotion or a successful career.

## Are there any mentoring principles?

Many mentoring relationships adhere to a common set of principles, such as:

- Mentoring is an enabling process that facilitates career development and skills exchange.
- The mentor and protégé are mutually committed to a beneficial mentoring relationship.
- Mentoring is based on an absolute commitment to trust and confidentiality between participants.

## What are the roles in a mentoring relationship?

To get the most out of the relationship, mentors and protégés need to understand their roles in the mentor program.

## **Mentor's role**

A mentor serves as a role model, offering penalty-free advice and counsel, and providing candid feedback to the protégé.

*In a mentoring relationship within an organization, the mentor can:*

- Introduce the protégé to people in the organization.
- Help the protégé get oriented.
- Familiarize the protégé with organizational processes and procedures.
- Listen and offer feedback.
- Recommend developmental activities.
- Suggest and provide resources.
- Communicate experiences and challenges.
- Assist the protégé in professional networking.
- Provide job shadowing opportunities.

*In all mentoring relationships, mentors can:*

- Suggest methods for advancing protégés' growth and offer résumé assistance and long-term career guidance.
- Provide lists of relevant books and Web resources.
- Discuss training and educational opportunities.
- Explore career goals and career paths the protégé can pursue.

## **Mentor benefits**

*Mentors who participate in a mentoring relationship can:*

- Gain personal satisfaction from helping others discover and reach their potential.
- Gain exposure to new perspectives from the protégé.
- Expand professional networks.
- Enhance coaching, feedback, and leadership skills.

## **Protégé's role**

The success of a mentoring relationship is often based on what the protégé wants to achieve from it. The protégé should:

- Ask questions.
- Listen actively.
- Share ongoing career planning and development goals and aspirations.
- Be open to the mentor's suggestions.
- Keep the lines of communication open with his or her mentor.

## **Protégé benefits**

*Protégés who participate in a mentoring relationship can:*

- Develop networks.
- Receive valuable sounding boards.
- Receive career guidance.
- Increase their visibility.
- Learn to adapt to changing professional and organizational circumstances.
- Develop or enhance skills needed to move forward in their careers.

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Although a mentor can suggest growth opportunities and career guidance, the protégé is ultimately responsible for his or her own career development.

## **What is the supervisor's role in a mentoring relationship?**

Unless a protégé is being mentored by his or her supervisor, the supervisor is usually “outside” of the mentoring relationship. In some cases, the protégé may choose not to disclose the mentoring relationship to his or her supervisor. In most cases supervisors can be real assets in the mentoring process, even from the sidelines.

The protégé's supervisor can serve as a resource for ideas on the protégé's development and growth. The supervisor's role in the mentoring process is one of support and encouragement. In a formal mentoring program, supervisors of the protégés will authorize the mentoring agreement so that they may be aware, and in support of, the minimum time required for mentoring relationships. As needed, supervisors will make adjustments in assignments and workloads to allow protégés adequate time to complete the program. Protégés are encouraged to look to their supervisors as a potential source of support for their mentoring activities.

*In all mentoring relationship supervisors can:*

**Provide input** – The *protégé's* supervisor can be an excellent source of input into the mentoring goal-setting process. He or she has observed the protégé on the job, and should know where the protégé's strengths and weaknesses lie.

**Sets parameters** – The protégé may feel more comfortable spending time in mentoring activities, if he or she has negotiated clear agreements with the supervisor about the time to be spent on mentoring activities. The supervisor can help the protégé prioritize work assignments in order to accommodate the mentoring activities.

**Provide support and feedback** – The supervisor can support the mentoring relationship simply by asking how it is going, offering support, and providing feedback. He or she might also help the employee find developmental opportunities in day-to-day activities.

## **How should mentors prepare for their roles?**

To help ensure the mentor/protégé relationship is successful the mentor should:

- Be willing to participate in mentoring training.
- Be willing to commit a minimum of two hours a month to the relationship.
- Reflect upon their individual experience – lessons learned.
- Think about what relevant books and Web resources might be of value to the protégé.

## **How long should mentoring continue?**

Because each individual learns and absorbs information at different rates, the length of time the mentoring relationship lasts depends on the individuals involved. Therefore, each mentor and protégé must determine how long the mentoring relationship should continue. Some relationships last for years.

To start, consider the following time scale:

- 3-6 months for relationships within an organization.
- 6-12 months for relationships between organizations.

## **Bringing the mentoring relationship to a close.**

It is important to end the mentoring relationship as consciously as it started. The end marks a passage, a completion. We have found that mentors and protégés gain a great deal from taking stock of their learning and accomplishments together.

If possible, set up a meeting face-to-face. If one wants an informal setting, meet over coffee or lunch. One can explore questions such as:

- How have we benefited personally and professionally from the mentoring process?
- What were our accomplishments? What did we each learn?
- What did we like best about our mentoring partnership?
- What did we most appreciate about each other?
- How might we use what we learned about mentoring in the future?
- Do we plan to stay in contact? If so, how? If not, what final thoughts do we have for each other?

## **Designing and Implementing a Mentoring Program for Your Organization**

Although it may not be acknowledged, some form of informal mentoring takes place in most organizations on a regular basis. There are obvious benefits to informal mentoring relationships however; an organized Mentoring Program is typically aligned with the mission, goals and objectives of the organization.

### **What does it take to develop a Mentoring Program?**

**Commitment of Senior Management.** Senior Management's acknowledgement of the importance of mentoring along with their personal involvement with the Program adds essential credence and garners support for the Program. Employees are more likely to volunteer for the Program when they are assured that it has the support of their supervisors and managers.

**Clarity of Purpose.** The organization must be clear about what it wants to achieve by implementing a Mentoring Program. The program should be coordinated with other areas within the organization such as recruitment, workforce and succession planning, individual development planning, and performance management.

**Program Planning.** Before implementing a Mentoring Program, take time to plan and get "buy-in" from target groups such as previous mentors and protégés. Establish a task force with members who are excited about mentoring. Name a Program Coordinator and clarify roles and responsibilities. In addition, hold orientation sessions.

**Resources.** Mentors and protégés will need guidance, self-study materials (e.g., books, videos, audiotapes, DVDs websites) as well as formal training to establish and maintain successful and meaningful mentoring relationships. Be sure to allow sufficient time for mentoring preparation, meetings and projects.



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U.S. Department of Justice  
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