



How to build a mentoring program

A mentoring
program toolkit

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Mentoring program toolkit overview

This toolkit is designed for use by any USPTO voluntary employee organization to assist in starting and maintaining an effective formal mentoring program. It was developed by the Office of Human Resources, Enterprise Training Division to be one of many resources available through the USPTO Leadership Development Program. Elements of this toolkit are based on best practices research on successful government and private sector programs. Lessons learned from the successful implementation of mentoring programs within the Office of Human Resources and the Patents Business Unit is also incorporated.

This toolkit will save the user time and effort by providing resources that support the roles of mentoring program managers, mentors, mentees, and organization stakeholders.

This toolkit is divided into 11 major sections that outline the major steps in the process of developing a successful program (a quick-start guide to the steps begins below). Each section contains corresponding tips, tools, techniques, and advice presented in a practical, how-to manner.

Quick-start guide

You can build an effective mentoring program by following the steps outlined below and on the next page. Detailed information is on the page numbers identified in parentheses next to each step.

Step 1: Identify the program manager and the senior level champion (page 5)

- Appoint someone to act as program manager who will oversee the development, implementation, and evaluation of the program (steps 2 through 11).
- Ensure the program manager is familiar with the mentoring program toolkit and has the time and resources to accomplish the responsibilities of the role.
- Secure a senior level champion who will communicate the purpose and need for the program to the organization's stakeholders, obtain their support, and ensure that the benefits are understood across the organization.

Step 2: Identify the purpose of the program (page 6)

- Determine what you want the program to accomplish or what you want the mentees to know or be able to do when they complete the program.
- Determine how you will measure the success of the program.

Step 3: Identify the intended mentors and mentees (page 7)

- Review your program purpose to determine your mentee pool (who is in need of this program?)

- Identify members with the most knowledge, skills, and experience to act as mentors.

Step 4: Create a program implementation action plan (page 10)

- Determine critical activities necessary for program development and implementation.
- Set realistic milestones and due dates.
- Appoint responsible parties for each major activity.

Step 5: Establish the program approval process (page 11)

- Decide which stakeholders need to approve program components (materials, activities, plan of action and milestones, and implementation).
- Establish the steps for obtaining approval of each component.

Step 6: Establish policies, procedures, and responsibilities (page 12)

- Determine how long the formal mentoring pairings will last (i.e., six months, one year, etc.).
- Establish the roles and responsibilities for the senior level champion, program manager, mentors, mentees, and stakeholders.

Step 7: Schedule activities to support mentors and mentees (page 16)

- Determine if an open house, special information session, or similar event is needed to help promote the program.
- Identify activities that will require assembling all of the mentors and mentees (i.e., orientation session, team-building exercises, mid-year review, guided discussions, guest speakers, field trips/tours, graduation, etc.).

Step 8: Create program documents and resources (page 18)

- Create the application forms, mentor/mentee agreement forms, activity logs, and evaluation forms.
- Establish a library of materials and resources to assist mentors and mentees during the program. Examples include how-to guides, job aids, and recommended reading materials and websites.

Step 9: Develop a communications strategy (page 19)

- Assess current methods for communicating to your members.
- Determine how you will promote and advertise the program and provide information and updates to your members (i.e., in person, print, web, email).
- Establish how and to whom you will report on the progress/success of the program.

Step 10: Train and educate the mentor and mentee pool on aspects and benefits of the mentoring program (page 20)

- Conduct an open house, if applicable, or invite potential mentors and mentees to special information sessions, or both.

- Use established communication methods to deliver information to potential mentors and mentees to encourage participation.

Step 11: Implement and evaluate the program (page 22)

- Solicit/receive/review/approve applications.
- Create mentor/mentee pairings based on compatibility from application forms.
- Conduct an orientation session.
- Conduct planned activities.
- Conduct a completion (graduation) ceremony.
- Evaluate each step of the implementation.
- At the conclusion of the completion (graduation) ceremony, conduct an overall program evaluation with the mentors and mentees.
- Conduct a follow-up evaluation about three months after the completion (graduation) ceremony to measure the success of the program.

Step 1: identify the program manager and senior level champion

Program manager

What does the program manager do?

The responsibilities of the program manager are as follows:

- Develops and implements the Plan of Action and Milestones
- Recruits participants
- Educates and trains participants
- Writes or drafts policies and rules
- Develops program materials
- Matches mentees with mentors
- Evaluates the program

Who should serve as the program manager?

The person selected as the program manager should be someone who possesses:

- Knowledge of the organization's mission, vision, and goals
- Knowledge of how the organization is structured
- Excellent time and project management skills
- The ability to meet deadlines
- Excellent written and oral communication skills

Senior level champion

What does a senior level champion do?

The responsibilities of the senior level champion are as follows:

- Communicate the purpose and need for the program to the organization's stakeholders
- Obtain and maintain the support of the organization's stakeholders
- Facilitate the communication of the benefits of the program to all members of the organization
- Facilitate or provide approvals for the program's policies, rules, plan of action, and materials

Who should serve as the senior level champion?

The person who will serve as senior level champion should:

- Be a senior level member in the organization
- Be a respected member of the organization's most senior board or committee
- Be committed to achieving the purpose and goals of the mentoring program

Step 2: Identify the purpose of the program

Before planning any aspect of the program, you must first determine:

- What you want the program to accomplish
- How you will measure success

To help determine the purpose, ask yourself the following questions:

- Are less experienced members performing below expectations?
- Do we want to increase the technical knowledge of our members?
- Do we want or need to provide overall personal and/or professional growth opportunities for our members?
- Do we want or need to develop the knowledge and skills of our less experienced members to ensure the growth and health of our organization?

To help determine how you will measure the success of the program:

- Identify stakeholders and their interests.
- Establish goals and outcomes.
- Establish measures for outcomes.

Here are some sample program purposes (or goals) to help guide you — your program can have more than one purpose or goal:

- Support new members in understanding the organization's mission, vision, values, and goals.
- Share the skills and knowledge of successful and experienced members with new members.
- Provide support in locating and accessing organizational resources and resource people.
- Foster open communication and dialogue.
- Provide motivation for job performance, creativity, and innovation.
- Bring employees together to establish a network of professionals.

Step 3: Identify the intended mentors and mentees

Mentors

Development of your mentees depends on exploring career aspirations, strengths, and weaknesses; collaborating on the means to “get there;” implementing strategies; and evaluating along the way. The mentor provides the “light” for the mentee to follow. Sharing wisdom and past experiences is what the mentee looks for from the mentor.

Ideally, a mentor should be able to:

- Explain how the organization is structured
- Be respected as an experienced and successful professional in the organization
- Support the organization’s mission, vision, and goals
- Stay accessible, committed, and engaged during the length of the program
- Listen well
- Offer encouragement through genuine, positive reinforcement
- Be a positive role model
- Share “lessons learned” from their own experiences
- Be a resource and a sounding board

You should develop some criteria to determine who should be in the mentor pool. Below and on the following page are some possible selection methods. Using a set of criteria can work well, and you should be careful to avoid conflicts between criteria or the use of criteria that cannot be used during certain times of year when people might be unavailable. And do not confuse the selection of mentors with the matching of mentors and mentees. Matching is covered later in this toolkit.

Mentor selection methods

- **Use career levels:** As in, “Your career level must be at least level X...” If your organization already uses a structure such as pay grades, years in the organization, certification levels, responsibilities, or job titles that define job levels, these are likely to contain some inherent criteria for which there is general acceptance and that can be used to simplify the mentor selection process. For example: “To be a mentor, you must be at least one pay grade above the lowest graded person who could be your mentee.”
- **Use number of years of recent experience in the job:** Typically, a minimum of five years experience in the specific job and at that location are required of mentors. Requiring a greater number of years could exclude some of your most enthusiastic and currently trained people. You should only require a greater number of years if your organization is structured so that members need more than five years to attain a mastery level and to be considered as suitable mentors.
- **Use peer recommendations:** Peer recommendations should be made based on a judgment that the candidate has the desired characteristics that the mentor program has defined. If this is done well, you will be asking the very people who know who the best members are, and nonparticipants will eventually look at

the existing pool of mentors and say, “He/She is a good member/worker/employee and should be a mentor.”

- **Use a self-nomination process:** This is one of the best methods if carefully structured. For example:
 - Define a major mentor responsibility to be that of modeling continual learning and growth, which requires tolerance for ambiguity and a willingness to seek and accept feedback from others about the best performance and practices.
 - Hold a Mentor Program informational meeting at several points during the year for any interested mentoring candidates. Require all mentor candidates to attend one of these (making them optional is acceptable, but less preferred). Explain how the program will work, how the role of the mentor is defined, and what mentors are expected to do. Acknowledge that not everyone will choose to serve in this role for a variety of reasons and that matches with appropriate mentees may sometimes be difficult to attain.
 - Tell the candidates: “If you will be uncomfortable or displeased when a more junior member asks you to explain your decisions, or to justify why you do a specific practice, then you should probably not become a mentor.”
 - If a person applies, and you wonder about his or her ability to be an effective mentor, it still might make sense to allow him or her to attend the mentor training. He or she may learn a lot, and may, given more information about mentoring, decide not to become a mentor after all. Even if the questionable person goes through with the training and still seeks a mentoring assignment, it is possible to deal with it by saying, “The ideal match for a person with your unique strengths has not been found.”

Here are some more tips that will help you successfully select your mentor pool:

- **Create face-saving ways to opt out:** Create ways in which people who are mentor candidates can decide, at any step in the selection process, that now is not the time to become a mentor and choose to remove themselves from the process. That can be accomplished by describing up front what becoming an effective mentor involves, and then suggesting that those who would be uncomfortable doing those things should consider withdrawing their candidacy, at least for now.
- **Don't create too rigid of a selection process:** Allow for flexibility. Let those who are interested in learning more about the mentor program know they can come to an informational meeting to hear about mentoring and that they may opt out at any time they wish. This is critical because some of the less desirable candidates will self-select out of the selection process when the role of the mentor and the expectation of modeling learning for others is understood.
- **Don't make too many promises about what attending mentor training means:** People should understand that being trained as a mentor DOES NOT mean they will automatically be assigned to work with a mentee. The point is to match the strengths of the mentor to the needs of the mentee. This means that some employees who become trained mentors may find that they are never matched because the program cannot find a mentee whose needs match the strengths of the mentor.

Mentees

The mentee's development depends on exploring career aspirations, strengths, and weaknesses; collaborating on means to “get there;” implementing strategies; and evaluating along the way. The mentor will provide the “light”

for the mentee to follow. Learning from the wisdom and past experiences of the mentor will serve the mentee well and produce great benefits.

Ideally, a mentee should be able to:

- Commit to self-development
- Assume responsibility for acquiring or improving skills and knowledge
- Discuss individual development planning with his or her mentor
- Be open and honest on his or her goals, expectations, challenges, and concerns
- Actively listen and ask questions
- Seek advice, opinions, feedback, and direction from his or her mentor
- Be open to constructive criticism/feedback, and ask for it
- Respect his or her mentor's time and resources
- Stay accessible, committed, and engaged during the length of the program
- Comfortably give feedback to his or her mentor on what is working or not working in the mentoring relationship

Step 4: Create a program implementation action plan

The program manager must:

- Determine critical activities necessary for program development and implementation
- Set realistic milestones and due dates
- Appoint responsible parties for each major activity

Critical activities are those conducted in steps 5 through 11. Based on the needs of the organization, additional activities can be accounted for in the action plan as well. And some activities covered in steps 5 through 11 may be combined if necessary.

Setting realistic milestones and due dates for the activities to be accomplished is essential to the success of the program. You should determine how long similar activities have taken to be approved and implemented when deciding on the best due date for each activity. Activities that require approval of the highest board or committee of the organization should typically be given more time than activities for which the program manager needs no approval to accomplish.

The program manager will be responsible for accomplishing most of the activities. However, depending on the structure of the organization, other individuals may be assigned some of the responsibilities.

Step 5: Establish the program approval process

Every organization has its own approval process. The program manager and senior level champion should work with the organization's leadership to determine which activities should be approved at various levels within the organization. A good approach is for the program manager to work with the senior level champion to develop an approval process for each critical activity and submit it to the organization's leadership for approval.

Policies and communications strategies should typically be approved at the highest level of the organization. Activities such as workshops, meetings, and training sessions can be left to the program manager and senior level champion to approve. Program documents can also be left to the program manager and senior level champion to approve, unless the documents are designed to capture personal information about the mentees and mentors. In that case, a higher level person or office in the organization may need to provide approval.

Step 6: Establish policies, procedures, and responsibilities

Your mentoring program should have formal policies, procedures, and responsibilities in place to ensure the purpose and goals are met.

At a minimum, you should establish policies and procedures for the following:

- Duration of the mentoring relationships
- Whether participation in mentoring program group activities is mandatory or optional
- Matching (mentees to mentors)
- Dealing with a mentee-mentor mismatch
- Closure (of the mentoring relationships)

Duration of the mentoring relationships

Formal pairings need time for the relationship to develop. Pairings should last at least six months. Although mentoring relationships can be effective for several years, you should limit the formal pairing within the program to no more than one year.

Participation in mentoring program group activities

Your mentoring program may choose to conduct group activities to enhance the relationships and provide continuing support to mentees and mentors. If you do, you must determine if mentees and mentors are required to participate in them. Activities such as an orientation session, graduation ceremony, and mid-year review are probably best to be made mandatory. Activities involving guest speakers, group discussions, and field trips are probably best to be made optional. Review the purpose and goals of your program to determine which activities need to be mandatory.

Matching

Typically, during recruitment a mentee will be asked for information that would help the organization, and specifically the mentoring program manager, to identify:

- The mentee's areas of strength as a professional
- The mentee's possible areas of need for further professional growth
- The mentee's preferences for the kind of person who they would like to have as a mentor
- The mentee's office/work location
- The mentee's job assignment or the future assignment for which they are being prepared
- Other factors that might influence matching with a prospective and appropriate mentor.
- Those and other areas should be considered in matching the mentees to a mentor.

The mentoring program manager should establish a set of mentee-mentor matching criteria, incorporating the following priorities:

- Degree that the mentor's strengths match the mentee's needs

- Similar job assignments or duties
- Close proximity
- Common free time

While it's very important to match a mentee with a mentor based on needs and strengths, you should ensure that mentees are matched with mentors who are easily accessible and available. A major part of mentoring is frequent informal opportunities to chat, so put mentors and mentees together in situations in which informal time is available. If mentees have limited access to their mentors, they may find it easier to seek the advice and informal mentoring of people nearest them, and those people may not possess the mentor traits appropriate for the program purpose and goals.

An optional criteria is age or level of experience, or both. Some people will prefer being mentored by someone who is older than they are. Others will be more concerned about what a potential mentor can provide them, regardless of any age difference. Take this into consideration, and speak with any mentee about his or her position on the subject if you believe the best mentor is someone the same age as or younger than the mentee.

Also, matching mentees with mentors who have identical personality types, work styles, or philosophical views can sometimes hinder achieving the goals of the program, as it can minimize the learning opportunity, which is the whole point of the mentoring relationship. To learn from someone else, it's often best if he or she sees things differently than we do. Otherwise, the mentee and mentor may have a relationship with no discoveries, no challenges, and little growth.

Dealing with a mentee-mentor mismatch

Matching mentees with mentors is not an exact science. And despite your best efforts, mismatches can occur, albeit infrequently. And they are something you must be prepared for.

Do not use negative words such as "poor" or "bad" to describe the mismatch because they can be perceived as placing blame on the mentee or mentor. Instead, use the term "mismatch," which places the responsibility on the process or program. Here are some proactive steps you can take to prevent problems associated with mismatches.

- Point out when you ask a person to be a mentor and again in the initial mentor training that mentee-mentor matching is an inexact science.
- Explain that it is reasonable to assume that as more is learned about the needs of the mentee, in a few cases, it will become clear that the wrong match was made, and it is no one's fault.
- Explain that the program has a no-fault divorce policy because it is primarily focused on effectively addressing the needs of the mentee. If what was planned does not address those needs, a new match makes good common sense.
- Point out that this does not mean that a mentor is a bad mentor. It is assumed that all mentors are strong employees. What it does mean is that the mentor's strengths were not those needed by this specific mentee.
- It is also assumed that all mentees will be open to mentoring and defer somewhat to the experience and wisdom of their mentor. If this is not the case, a new match may help, and the change would be more about the mentee than the mentor.

- Repeat the same message to mentees when they are told they will have a mentor and when they are together at any orientation meetings.
- Be sure to emphasize that there will be a mismatch check with every mentoring pair. This is vital so that if it becomes necessary to discuss a mismatch, the people will not feel “singled out.”
- Conflicts are a natural result of putting diverse people together and asking them to work as partners. If a mentoring pair can work through conflicts by valuing how diverse they are, the richness of their different viewpoints, background, and experience, then they can learn a great deal more from each other, precisely because they are not thinking the same way. Seen from this perspective, differences can be a strength, not a weakness, of any relationship.

Plan a mismatch check about one month after mentoring starts

Plan on separately checking with every mentee and mentor starting about a month after mentoring has started. Inquire as to whether he or she feels the mentoring match is as effective as it needs to be. Ask the mentee first, and if you get an indication of a problem, don't assume it's time for a change, and don't create an expectation of any specific kind of solution as of yet. You have only a part of the whole picture. Promise to quickly investigate the situation and to facilitate a “resolution.” Then check with the mentor, first asking for his or her feelings about the usefulness of the match before sharing any mentee concerns.

When one member of the pair says the match is not working, explore the reasons and decide if:

- The problem can be resolved, or at least if an attempt to resolve it is needed
- A new match is needed

Discussing the possibility of a mismatch

Repeat the same message (no fault, etc.) when discussing a possible mismatch, as was given when the original match was made. Your purposes are several:

- You want to ensure that the best support is provided to every mentee
- You want to dissolve ineffective matches as early as possible and create a better situation
- You want to end inappropriate matches but without doing damage to the dignity of either party

Dissolving the mismatch

When it is apparent that a mismatched relationship must be dissolved, ensure the problem is based on the program matching criteria and not the mentee and mentor. Speak with the mentee and mentor separately. Sample starter dialogue is below.

To the mentee, say:

“When we (the program) originally made the match, we did so as soon as we could. We did that because we believe that mentees deserve mentoring support as quickly as possible. Had we waited until we had all the information we have now, you (the mentee) might have had no support once the program started. We believe that's not right. We are working to find another mentor for you.”

To the mentor, say:

“It would not be fair to you or useful for the mentee or for our program to keep a mentor matched to a mentee who does not need the specific strengths and experience that you (the mentor) have to offer. That’s why we are seeking a different mentor for your mentee. When we can find a mentee whose needs match your specific strengths and experience, we will certainly ask you to be a mentor again and to mentor that person.”

Closure

When the pre-determined end date of the formal mentoring program has been reached, the formal mentoring pairings can be dissolved. However, that does not mean that the mentoring pairs cannot continue an informal (or formal) mentoring relationship. Learning is a life-long, continual process. Mentees and mentors should be continual learners, even after their formal relationship comes to an end.

You should prepare for closure as it relates only to the formal end date of the program. Focus on transitioning the mentoring relationship rather than ending it.

You should allow for and encourage the mentoring relationship to transition to at least one of the following forms:

- **From formal to informal:** If goals weren’t achieved during the structured period or if new goals were identified, the mentoring pair should be encouraged to continue their relationship on an informal basis if that is what each person feels will be most beneficial.
- **Transition to a different partner:** Some mentees may wish to be mentored by someone in a different career field or feel there are no more benefits to be gained by remaining with the same mentor. This happens and is okay. This transition could be informal, or it could be part of the next formal mentoring program you conduct.
- **Transition to peer coaching:** The mentoring pair may shift into a peer coaching relationship where the mentor and mentee support each other’s professional growth.

Natural points of closure

You should anticipate and allow for natural points of closure. Some mentoring relationships will end before the pre-determined end date of the program. As discussed on page 13, some relationships end because of a mismatch. Others will end because the mentee and mentor have achieved all of their desired goals and mutually believe there are no more benefits to be gained by continuing the relationship. When that happens, the program manager should be in agreement that the relationship should end and should allow for and facilitate an appropriate transition for the mentee and mentor.

Some relationships will end early because the mentee or mentor departs the organization before the program concludes and is not able to continue meeting. Hopefully, the departing partner will coordinate with the remaining partner and the program manager to allow for an appropriate transition. If that does not happen, the program manager should be prepared to quickly identify a new mentor if the remaining partner is the mentee. If the remaining partner is a mentor, the program manager should determine if it is appropriate to identify any unmatched mentees who could benefit from the mentor’s strengths and knowledge with the time remaining in the program.

Step 7: Schedule activities to support mentors and mentees

A formal mentoring program needs structured activities to support the mentors and mentees.

At a minimum, you should schedule the following activities:

- Open house
- Orientation session
- Mid-year review
- Graduation ceremony

Open house

You will need a way to market and introduce the program to your members. One way to do that is to conduct an information session called an open house. An open house is a gathering of sorts to allow your members to learn more about your program. At your open house, your program manager should be visible and accessible to talk about the program benefits. Having your senior level champion on hand as well lends additional credibility. You could conduct scheduled mini-briefings during your open house if you desire, although they are probably not necessary. Plan your open house to be held in a room large enough to allow people to walk around comfortably, with stations set aside for prospective mentors and mentees. Provide information packets at the stations for your members to take with them to learn more about the benefits, policies, and procedures of your program.

Orientation session

Once you've recruited and matched your mentees and mentors, you should kick off the program with an orientation session. During the orientation session, you should outline and clarify policies and procedures. Your senior level champion or organization leader should deliver a short speech about the mentoring program during the orientation as well.

Mid-year review

At the half-way point, you should assemble your mentoring pairs to learn how they are progressing and ask them to share things they've learned and ways they've learned them. This is a great opportunity to also ask for and receive feedback on program policies and procedures to ensure your program remains effective.

Graduation ceremony

A graduation ceremony is a great way to formally mark the closure of the formal mentoring relationships. And it's another great opportunity to ask for and receive feedback on program policies and procedures. You should give every mentee and mentor a certificate celebrating the success of their relationship. And you should have the senior level champion or organization leader deliver a speech to mark the occasion.

You should also consider the following activities:

- Workshops
- Field trips/tours
- Guest speakers

Workshops

You can plan and conduct workshops on any topic you feel will help the mentees, mentors, and program meet organizational goals. Here is a short list of what your workshops can focus on:

- A particular topic central to your organization's goals
- Key competencies required by most of your mentees
- Team-building activities to enhance the relationships or develop rapport

Field trips/tours

You could organize a field trip or tour of a facility as a team-building activity or learning event. Use your imagination. You know your organization and members best. Are there any facilities or firms that you could tour to help your organization and your mentoring program meet its goals?

Guest speakers

Like workshops, you could invite guest speakers to lecture your mentoring program pairs on any topic you feel will help them and your program meet organizational goals.

Step 8: Create program documents and resources

To properly manage your program, you must create, at a minimum, the following documents:

- Applications (for mentees and mentors)
- Confidentiality Agreement
- Mentoring Agreement
- Mentee Action Plan
- Mentoring Log
- Evaluation Forms

Applications

Mentees and mentors must apply to participate in the mentoring program. Sample applications for each are on pages 3 and 5 of the Templates and Forms booklet.

Confidentiality Agreement

The mentoring program must be a safe environment for mentees and mentors to freely share information about one another. To help build trust, they must be able to establish clear boundaries on how the shared information is to be treated. A sample agreement is on page 7 of the Templates and Forms booklet.

Mentoring Agreement

The mentoring agreement establishes how and when the mentee and mentor will meet. A sample agreement is on page 8 of the Templates and Forms booklet.

Mentee Action Plan

To determine activities to ensure mentoring goals are met, a mentee action plan is a must. The mentee will complete the plan with help from the mentor. A template is on page 9 of the Templates and Forms booklet.

Mentoring Log

The mentee and mentor should record their meetings and activities to show progress achieved. A template is on page 10 of the Templates and Forms booklet.

Evaluation Forms

At the mid-point of the program and at the end, you must ask the mentees and mentors to evaluate the program. Their input will help you make any necessary adjustments to ensure the program remains effective. Sample forms are on pages 11–17 of the Templates and Forms booklet.

Step 9: Develop a communications strategy

Your organization may already have effective communication methods in place. Assess them to determine how they can best help your mentoring program. Then determine how you will promote and advertise the program as well as provide information and updates to your members. Ask yourself whether communications in person, print, web, or email, or any combination of them, is best for your organization. Finally, establish who in your organization needs to receive reports on the progress and success of your program as well as how you will deliver those reports.

In short, your communications strategy should allow you to do the following:

- Promote and advertise your program
- Provide information and updates to your members
- Report on the progress/success of the program

The open house discussed on page 16 should factor into your communications strategy. More information on the open house, specifically regarding recruiting efforts, is on the next page.

Step 10: Train and educate the mentor and mentee pool

Before training and educating the mentors and mentees, you must first recruit them. However, you should not use the term “recruit” in your communications strategy, as it may offend or scare off potential candidates.

You can use the open house as an effective way to attract mentors and mentees to your program. Other ways to attract mentors and mentees include the use of organizational newsletter articles, broadcast email messages, and printed materials such as posters and brochures.

You should also use the open house to educate the mentor and mentee pool on why it’s important to be a mentor and why it’s important to have a mentor.

Online training for mentors and mentees

Employees at the USPTO have unlimited access to two very good online mentoring training modules. The modules are accessible through the Commerce Learning Center. Search for courses titled “Effective Mentoring” and “Achieving Success: The Help of a Mentor.” The course library is updated a few times each year and some course titles change as a result. Contact the Enterprise Training Division in the Office of Human Resources for assistance if you cannot find the courses.

Conduct mentor information sessions

To have an effective mentoring program, you need to have enough mentors to meet the needs of your mentees. One way to maintain a pool of mentors is to continuously recruit them. You should conduct several information sessions each year for prospective mentors.

Goals for the information sessions are to:

- Attract new mentors for the program
- Define what is expected of effective mentors so they can make an informed choice about applying
- Ensure that mentors understand the process and criteria for selection, matching, dealing with mismatches, mentor training, and serving as mentors
- Ensure that persons who should not be mentors choose to not apply for the position

During the information sessions, the program manager should cover the following:

- The first three goals for the meeting (from the above paragraph)
- Purpose and goals for the mentoring program
- Roles and responsibilities of effective mentors
- Benefits of being a mentor
- The mentor selection process and criteria
- The mentee-mentor matching process and criteria
- The program’s process and timeline for dealing with mismatches (do NOT skip this)
- Required initial training and follow-up training and meetings

- Mentor Application
- Explain any remaining “next steps” mentors might take and who to contact with additional questions

An alternative activity that may be effective is to use a panel of experienced mentors (two or three should be sufficient) to discuss the mentoring process and answer questions along with the leader.

Educating mentees

You should use your open house as well as printed and electronic articles to educate your mentees. You could host a separate information meeting for mentees if you desire, but the open house should be sufficient.

Information packets for mentors and mentees

You should provide information packets to mentors and mentees during the open house and then again during the orientation session.

Mentor packets should contain the following documents, which can be found in the accompanying Templates and Forms publication:

- Application Form (page 5)
- Mentor benefits (page 19)
- Mentor roles and responsibilities (page 20)
- Ideas to assist your mentee (page 21)
- Effective questioning tips (page 22)
- Giving feedback (page 24)
- Tips for being a good listener (page 25)

Mentee packets should contain the following documents:

- Application Form (page 3)
- Mentee benefits (page 26)
- Mentee roles and responsibilities (page 27)
- Receiving feedback (page 28)

The following documents can go in both packets or just the mentee packet and can be provided only at the orientation session if you prefer:

- Confidentiality agreement (page 7)
- Mentoring agreement (page 8)
- Mentee action plan (page 9)
- Mentoring log (page 10)

Step 11: Implement and evaluate the program

Once you've completed steps 1 through 10 and have established a timeline for your mentoring program, you are ready to implement it.

In order, you should:

- Solicit/receive/review/approve applications
- Create mentor/mentee pairings based on compatibility from application forms
- Conduct an orientation session
- Conduct planned activities
- Conduct a completion (graduation) ceremony
- Evaluate each step of the implementation

At the mid-year (or mid-point of a six-month program), ask all mentees and mentors to complete the Mid-point Evaluation Form found on pages 11–13 of the Templates and Forms booklet. Take action as necessary on the evaluations.

At the conclusion of the completion (graduation) ceremony, conduct an overall program evaluation with the mentors and mentees. Use the Final Evaluation Forms found on pages 15–17 of the Templates and Forms booklet. Take action as necessary prior to launching the next program.

Conduct a follow-up evaluation about three months after the completion (graduation) ceremony to measure the success of the program. You can use the Final Evaluation Form, and you may need to modify some of the questions based on the goals of your program and your organization.