

FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions about the Air National Guard **Mentoring** Program

1. Participation in a mentoring program IS NOT...

- *Mandatory for promotion or success in the Air National Guard.*
- *In any way a guarantee for promotion, consideration for promotion or a different position.*

2. Participation in a mentoring program IS...

- *Volunteer.*
- *Individually based on the needs of the respective person (protégé driven)*
- *Designed to improve networking to facilitate a more productive and friendly work environment.*
- *A way to take charge of your own career, both personal and professional development.*

3. What is mentoring?

Historically: *The word “mentor” was conceived by the Greek poet Homer in his epic poem “The Odyssey,” written in 800 BC. In this tale Odysseus is preparing for war, which will separate him from his young son, Telemachus for many years. Odysseus charged his close and confidant acquaintance, ‘Mentor,’ with the responsibility of preparing his young son, Telemachus, for his life as heir to his father’s throne.*

Mentoring is a relationship in which a person with greater experience or wisdom guides another to a higher level of personal and professional excellence. The key to successful mentoring is providing feedback to subordinates on their current duty performance, personal and professional development needs, and guidance for them to achieve near-, mid-, and long-term career goals.

Mentoring occurs when a person with knowledge, (mentor) shares this knowledge with an eager student (protégé). Mentors empower proteges to further their personal and professional self development. Mentoring is an exchange of information, but also of ideas, experiences, and friendship in a strategy for professional growth and development.

4. What is a mentor?

Often referred to as leaders, guides, coaches, sponsors, and transitional figures - must be good at their job, respected in their organization, have professional skills, inclusive and collaborative spirit, , and organizational values. A mentor is someone that a protégé can express his or her fears, frustrations, and goals without fear of reprisal. A mentor helps a protégé develop the plans and blue prints to solve their own problems or reach their goals.

5. What is a protégé?

(other common terms: mentee, partner, associate, student, trainee, intern, participant, aspirant, mentoree)

A protégé is a person seeking the mentoring. A person under the guidance of someone influential who can help shape career advancement and personal growth. Simply a protégé is looking for someone with whom they can express fears, frustrations, and goals with out fear of reprisal. A protégé is a person who wishes to learn from the experiences of another or looking for a sounding board or someone with a different perspective.

6. What is a mentoring partnership?

There is no text book answer. Every mentoring partnership will be different based on the needs, goals and objectives of the protege. A mentor may assist a protege in many different ways that will empower the protege to enhance his or her professional development.. A mentor may assist a protégé in planning a career path, teach a new skill, offer experienced advice or input on work related projects.

7. What is the difference between a mentor, a role model, and a coach?

In this definition, a mentor is an umbrella word to include certain role models, coaches, and others who go out of their way to help. A mentor can be a role model

or example for a protege to emulate. Yet, you can have a helpful mentor who isn't necessarily someone you want to imitate. A mentor is an active participant in the relationship with a protégé, whereby a role model can influence from afar without ever meeting or knowing about the admirer

8. What benefits are there to being a mentor?

Mentors have a chance, through these partnerships, to “put something back in to the pot,” for example, to pay back past mentors for the help their mentors gave. Mentors get recognition from their peers and their managers for helping to develop promising people. They also can learn new knowledge and skills from their proteges. Mentors have also been known to report receiving tremendous personal satisfaction from most mentoring relationships. Someone has noticed you or been “matched” with you, come to respect you, and would like to learn more from you. To an experienced employee a professional partnership with a generally younger protégé can be refreshing and revitalizing to your career. You may find new or creative ideas for your own work by conversing with your associate. Bear in mind that the responsibility of being a mentor could be considered colossal, but the intrinsic reward is priceless.

9. What benefits are there for a protégé?

Being mentored can help in several ways. Perhaps the greatest thing a mentor can do is encourage- convey a sincere belief in a protégé's ability to succeed. Mentors also give inspiration, advice, corrective feedback on the protégé's actions, formal and informal instruction (on organizational politics as well as on more technical topics), introductions to people who can help, and opportunities for proteges to demonstrate their skills.

10. Does a person really need a mentor in order to succeed?

It is possible for an individual to be successful without the help of an old-fashioned, long-term mentoring relationship. In fact, those traditional mentoring partnerships are now rare and aren't always useful. But in today's competitive environment, people need other people—mentors who believe in them—to teach them the ropes, open doors, save them time, and prevent them from making critical mistakes. Books, courses, and trial-and-error learning can't provide this wisdom as effectively. These modern mentoring relationships can be short-term, or they can be long lasting. When handled well, they enhance the proteges success.

11. Can a person have more than one mentor?

Yes, in fact, it's a good idea. You can have mentors for different aspects of life. Career mentors, spiritual mentors, social mentors, intellectual mentors, even physical mentors. Normally these relationships will be successive, not simultaneous. NOTE: Within the Air National Guard the mentoring process is protégé driven. Each protégé should be able to have at least one mentor. A mentor may have more than one protégé but it is suggested to begin process with a one- to –one partnership.

12. Doesn't the mentor have to be older than the protege?

Typically, mentors are older, but they don't have to be. Mentoring relationships can take several forms: older/younger protégé. If the mentor has something to offer (e.g. experience and knowledge) and the protégé is committed, ages aren't important. People can acquire mentors at any age.

13. Where does my supervisor fit into the mentoring picture?

This is a question the mentoring partners need to address and answer in the forming stages of the partnership. Generally, proteges do not want mentors to speak with their supervisors for fear of the possibility that confidentiality may be compromised. Mentors on the other hand want supervisors to know that he or she will be interacting with that supervisor's employee. Most supervisors would embrace any program that will help develop their employees and improve their performance. As a general rule, it is wise for proteges to include their immediate supervisors in mentoring experiences to some extent. The Mentoring Process Coordinator is also available to provide assistance and guidance in making the right decision.

14. What do mentors and proteges do together?

Here are several of the common activities: talking together (e.g., about the mentor's past experiences, the proteges goals, plans, and skills; the mentor's career path; useful solving strategies: attending meetings, conferences, and other events together (and discussing these later); working together on activities; having the protégé observe the mentor handling challenging situations role-playing situations faced by the protégé; exchanging and discussing written materials (such as a document written by the protégé or an article valued by the mentor); co-authoring a publication; interacting with other people (including persons who could be of help to the protégé and other mentor-protégé pairs).

15. How will the Air National Guard as an organization benefit from mentoring?

The Air National Guard will benefit in several ways. Proteges quickly learn rules, procedures, and skills from their mentors. Mentoring programs tend to be cost-effective developmental efforts by retaining qualified staff; Mentoring can help develop and maintain more well rounded and motivated employees; it is an effective means of integrating employees. Proteges appreciate the attention of their mentors and may develop increased loyalty to their organizations. As a result, recruitment and retainment costs are reduced. Mentors generally enjoy their roles, often increase their productivity and find renewed enthusiasm for their organizations and their work. Organizations with mentoring programs have an edge over their competitors in recruiting, including with new college graduates.

**DFI study dated 8 Sep 00.*

16. How often do mentors and proteges have to get together in order for the relationship to work?

Time commitment is very little for what you receive in return! The mentor and the protégé determine together when, where, and how often they will meet. The Air National Guard Mentoring program recommends you spend a minimum of two or three or two hours per month. In-person meetings can be supplemented with phone calls, emails and written communications. In formal mentoring programs for new employees, the contact should be at least weekly at first, becoming less frequent as the needs of the proteges change.

17. Are there stages in a mentoring relationship?

*Typically, yes, particularly, in long-term relationships. Different researchers have unique names for the phases, but essentially there's an identifiable cycle. In the first stage, **initiation**, both are highly impressed with each other. The mentor is the expert-teacher, and the protégé is the novice-learner. They move into a more equalizing stage, **development**, where the protégé continues to learn a great deal, starting to catch up with the mentor. In the next stage, **realistic appraisal or disillusionment**, one, or both disillusioned with (or tired of) the relationship as it is. Next, in **parting**, they separate—in the psychological sense of disengagement—and usually geographically as well. In the final stage, **transformation**, the two become more collegial, even friends, and the protégé may even provide mentoring for the former mentor and others.*

15. Do formal mentoring programs really work?

Yes, provided the timing and purpose are right in the organization and participation is voluntary. Management must support the program by allocating resources such as funding and assigning the right program coordinator. The coordinator must organize and manage the program. The participants in the program must be coached on their responsibilities.

16. Doesn't there need to be chemistry between the mentor and protégé?

"Chemistry," if defined as mutual admiration and liking, is an asset in mentoring if it happens to occur. But good mentoring can also take place if the two parties simply respect one another. If the mentor sees the protégé as having good potential, and the protégé admires and needs the mentor's expertise, the relationship can work-even if the two don't feel "chemistry." Sometimes, liking and even friendship emerge with time.

17. Does long-distance mentoring work or if my mentor is located somewhere else will it work?

Yes! The commitment is up to the pair. Remote, long distance, "tele-mentoring" is more difficult, and yet it can and does work. If the key ingredients are present (mutual respect, specific help which is valuable to the protégé, the right timing, and meaningful contact), the protégé will certainly benefit.

To make long distance partnerships successful, mentors and proteges should treat phone meetings as seriously as in-person ones. Meetings should have an agenda and an expected outcome. Use existing resources such as emails. They should try to meet in person at least a few times. There is no substitute for personal contact in developing a mentoring partnership.

18. How long does the mentoring partnership last?

In the Air National Guard Mentoring Program a formal mentoring partnership will be structured to last for one year. A mentoring partnership may last for much longer than that, perhaps a lifetime. In some cases a partnership may end much sooner.

19. What about our supervisors and senior enlisted force? Aren't they mentors?

*Not as defined by this program. Mentoring is defined by this program as very specific. It is consistent, lasting, individual, and professional. **You can not always choose your supervisor but you can choose your mentor.** The bottom line is two people, separated by two ranks (generally) where one person does not rate or evaluate the other person, sit down and exchange information in an egalitarian (equal) partnership, free of fear of reprisal in a planned and facilitated strategy for personal and professional growth.*

20. How do I find a mentor?

There are 2 main ways to find a mentor in this program:

- 1. You know of someone who you would like to be your mentor. Approach them and ask them if they would be willing to enroll in the program as your mentor. (Enrollment is to have a measuring for success tool for future reference)*
- 2. Enroll in the program by completing the application form and taking the 94 item matching instrument which assesses talent and coaching style to suggest a best possible match for the protégé to pick his/her own mentor. The process coordinator will input data into database and a matching product will be produced. It will list the potential mentors for a given protégé. It is up to the protégé to choose their mentor.*

21. How does the matching take place using the electronic database?

IT is an ACCESS database, using SPSS software to make a strong correlation for the matching process. The matching takes place after participants take a Gallup instrument (94 items) to match mentors with those proteges desiring mentoring and lean toward long term career guidance that emphasizes the "whole person." It is a way to bring people together that wouldn't normally meet but will benefit both using questions on leadership and coaching styles. It also will help to keep track of who is in the program so that the success of the program can be monitored for improvement.

22. What if I get involved in the program and at some point decide that my mentor or protégé is not a good match (for whatever reason)?

A no fault termination will apply. All participants should be aware of the no fault termination at the beginning of the process. No explanation will be required. The First Sergeant will then match you with a different mentor or protégé as it may apply.

23. If I begin the process as mentor, and find I cannot undertake the responsibility, what happens?

This is a situation that is better off avoided. Carefully evaluate the time commitment of the program and your own scheduling constraints prior to getting involved in the program. Needless to say life is capable of throwing curve balls when you are at home plate. For unforeseen reasons, a “no fault termination” without reprisal will apply.

24. Are there any other resources that are available for use?

There is a workbook for both officers and enlisted for career progression and made electronically so that it can be unique for each base/wing. They provide the basic information for guard members to reference when they have questions or need information regarding personnel issues, finance, etc. Check out the website: airguard.ang.af.mil/cfh/mentoring for more!

25. Can an officer and enlisted enter a mentoring partnership and vice versa?

Yes. The mentoring partnership is based on the needs of the protégé, and partnership goals should be tailored to fit those needs. For example if an NCO is interested in earning a commission then it is appropriate to match them with an officer as a mentor.

26. Can civilian personnel be mentored by military personnel and vice versa?

Yes! The mentoring partnership is based on the needs of the protégé. Typically civilian personnel will have substantial knowledge of the immediate work environment, and can offer a different perspective on problems. Often times military personnel have had varied assignments and may offer experiences that may be foreign to civilian personnel. This will only increase the organizational understanding and communication.