

10 Steps TO BEING A GOOD MENTOR



Many successful leaders attribute their own growth and development to having one or more mentors. Mentors can provide guidance, share experiences, open new networks, take time to listen. They play an important role in both the professional and personal development of young and mid-career professionals; however, taking on the role of mentor can be just as beneficial to the mentor as the mentee.

GFOA's new mentorship program begins this fall. For those selected to participate, we look forward to a structured program that involves a mix of professional development content and meaningful connections between mentor and mentee.

Now, for all mentors, here is a quick guide for being a good mentor.

1 Make time. Everyone is busy, but mentors and mentees need to prioritize their time together. Schedule time. Keep your commitment. Don't try to multi-task.

2 Set clear expectations and boundaries. Establish goals, have a plan for what you expect to get from your mentor-mentee relationship, and set boundaries for what you won't cover.

3 Listen. Mentors need to understand their mentees. Listen to their goals, their challenges, their ideas, and their concerns. If necessary, ask questions. During your time together, devote your full attention to helping and showing that you care.

4 Give feedback and constructive criticism. Be encouraging, but also be practical. Mentees are looking for direction and advice. After listening to your mentee, provide your

thoughts and recommendations on what you think will help them achieve their goals or how they can improve.

5 Share your experience and perspectives. Recognize that you have an interesting story to tell. Every mentor has their own unique career journey that provides a unique position for offering advice.

6 Be vulnerable. Providing good advice may require you to admit past failures or experiences that were difficult for you. Your mentee doesn't expect that you have all the answers, but they will benefit from your honesty and learn from your experience.

7 Engage in structured activities. Complete the program. Structured experiences are designed to facilitate discussion and bring out areas you can explore in more detail. Don't jump into just providing advice.

8 Be an accountability partner. Hold your mentee accountable. Think of yourself as a coach and make sure you can challenge your mentee and be an accountability partner.

9 Make connections—introduce your mentee to other people. Where appropriate, provide connections and help your mentee build out their professional network. Your mentee will likely bring value to your existing connections or may even help you extend your own network.

10 Follow up. Check in on your mentee. Follow-up activities don't have to be time consuming, but planning to connect for a few minutes at a future conference or sending the occasional email or LinkedIn message can provide an important reminder to your mentee about the importance of building relationships.



LEARN MORE

For more information about GFOA's mentorship program, please visit gfoa.org/mentorship.

GFOA expects to host the next offering in Spring 2027. Interested participants may apply in late 2026.