



**NVBDC**

CERTIFICATION OF DISABLED &  
VETERAN-OWNED BUSINESSES

## Supplier Mentoring Program Guide

## **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

The National Veteran Business Development Council (NVBDC) is responsible for providing a gold-standard national third-party certification process for veteran-owned businesses (VOBs) and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses (SDVOBs). NVBDC, working closely with corporate partners, uses a comprehensive approach to providing NVBDC-certified VOBs and SDVOBs with resources, business developmental opportunities, and, most important, access to corporate procurement opportunities. Detailed information about NVBDC and our certification can be found at [nvbdc.org](http://nvbdc.org).

As an essential component of these efforts, the NVBDC Supplier Mentoring Program (SMP) was created to further supplement the development of NVBDC-certified suppliers – building more viable suppliers to better position them for growth and inclusion in corporate and government supply chains. *The goal of the SMP is to specifically assist VOBs and SDVOBs with the opportunity to build relationships and capacity.*

The success of this supplier mentoring initiative depends on engaged and collaborative individuals.

- NVBDC corporate partner representatives who are committed to the growth and development of military veteran suppliers (VOBs and SDVOBs) and who are willing to provide expertise and guidance to benefit these suppliers by dedicating time, resources, and knowledge
- NVBDC-certified suppliers who recognize the inherent need to improve their skills, business processes, and management acumen to grow their businesses and are willing to dedicate themselves to participating in a structured mentoring approach for improvement

## **PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

- Develop lasting relationships between corporate and government partners and NVBDC-certified suppliers
- Transfer of valuable knowledge and expertise
- Increase understanding of challenges confronting military veteran suppliers and procurement organizations
- Demonstrate a commitment to the military veteran supplier community
- Expand business networks

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### ***Mentor/Mentee ("Mentorship Team") Responsibilities:***

- Take a proactive approach to the mentoring relationship. The Mentor and Mentee will establish a regular meeting schedule. Meetings can be held monthly or, at a minimum, once every two months over the course of 11 months.
- Provide regular feedback to each other and evaluate progress.
- Foster open and honest communication. The Mentor and the Mentee must be able to trust that each other will not disclose their discussions with others outside of the program administration. Therefore, communication between the Mentor and Mentee will be kept confidential. *(Recommend signing a mutual NDA or confidentiality agreement – to be determined by Mentor/Mentee.)*

### ***Mentee Responsibilities:***

- Honor the ground rules developed for the mentoring relationship.
- Drive the relationship with the Mentor.
- Demonstrate accountability and responsibility for maintaining communication with the Mentor and the NVBDC SMP Program Manager.
- Provide an informal monthly progress report (email) to the NVBDC SMP Program Manager.

### ***Mentor Responsibilities:***

- Honor the ground rules developed for the mentoring relationship.
- Be available to meet with Mentee according to a regular, pre-determined schedule. When possible, consider a team mentoring approach\* to allow for maximal availability.
- Specify to his/her Mentee how they may be contacted, at what frequency, and by which method (face-to-face, phone, email, virtual meeting).
- Provide consultation and industry/business insights as directed by the Mentee's goals and objectives.
- Seek out, when feasible, opportunities and experiences to enhance the Mentee's learning experience.

**\*NOTE:** *When practicable, the Mentor is encouraged to include other members of their corporate organization. The Mentor has the option to engage the Mentee with a 1-1 approach or engage with a team approach. For example, the Mentor can begin the mentoring relationship and then plan to include a member of their Procurement Organization and a member from their Employee Resource Group. This team mentoring approach could be highly beneficial by providing a Mentee with a greater understanding of the corporation as a whole.*

### ***NVBDC SMP Program Manager Responsibilities:***

- Serve as the facilitator, providing participants with direction and guidance to maximize positive outcomes of the mentoring relationship.
- Act as a liaison if challenges or obstacles occur between the Mentor and Mentee.
- Be the main point of contact when submitting program documentation, including the required *Mentorship Agreement & Goals* form.
- Track, measure, and evaluate program success.

## **SUSTAINING AN EFFECTIVE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP**

### ***I. Abide by Mentorship Ground Rules***

The following ground rules serve as the basis for the Mentor-Mentee relationship:

1. Mentor and Mentee must maintain confidentiality and trust throughout the relationship.
2. Mentee drives the mentorship relationship, including:
  - Scheduling meetings and sending meeting reminders.
  - Preparing and providing, in advance, structured agendas and progress reports to maximize the effectiveness of each session.
3. Mentor serves as a committed and active participant in the mentoring relationship, including:
  - Being available to meet with Mentee at least once every other month. Team mentoring approaches are encouraged to maximize availability.
  - Documenting key takeaways and action items after each meeting for future follow-up.
4. In the event a meeting needs to be rescheduled, the cancelling party is expected to provide as much advanced notice as reasonably possible.
5. Mentee and Mentor are expected to make good faith efforts toward accomplishing the Mentorship Goals. If either party is concerned about the progress of objectives, they are encouraged to talk openly about challenges they are experiencing. Where needed, the SMP Program Manager will act as liaison.

In addition to the fixed program ground rules outlined above, the mentorship team is encouraged to define their own relationship-specific ground rules as part of the mentorship agreement.

### ***II. Establish a Regular Meeting Schedule***

During their first meeting, Mentor and Mentee should establish a regular meeting schedule, including meeting dates and times, duration, and format (in-person, virtual, or a mix).

### III. Set Mentorship Goals

Establishing clear goals and expectations at the onset of the mentoring relationship will create a strong foundation for future interactions and ensure successful outcomes. **Remember, the goal of this mentorship program is to assist VOBs and SDVOBs in two key areas: building relationships and building capacity. It is NOT designed, nor should it be viewed as an opportunity to gain a specific corporate contact from which to win contracts/business.**

The SMP goals for each Mentor/Mentee will consist of two parts: A) two common program goals and B) up to three unique Mentor/Mentee goals.

#### Part A – The two common program goals are:

1. Build relationships with key stakeholders at corporation
2. Differentiate and succinctly communicate Mentee's company value proposition

#### Part B – The remaining two to three goals will be unique to the Mentor/Mentee relationship.

These goals should be determined together – Mentor and Mentee – and mutually agreeable.

Once identified, an action plan for each goal should be developed and implemented throughout the mentoring relationship.

Goals should be **specific, attainable, realistic, and measurable**. The goals should be set during/after your first meeting. Goals number three to five may be modified as appropriate throughout the year.

#### Examples of realistic and attainable mentorship goals:

**GOOD:** gain a deeper understanding of an industry

**NOT GOOD:** Grow my company sales by 20%

**GOOD:** attend industry-specific training

**NOT GOOD:** Obtain a contract from my mentor

## PROGRAM TIMELINE

<b>July 31</b>	Application Deadline
<b>August - September</b>	Applicant Selection and Mentor-Mentee Matching Process
<b>October 1</b>	Announcement of Mentor-Mentee Pairs
<b>End of October</b>	NVBDC Nationals Mentor-Mentee Meet-and-Greet (for those able to attend)
<b>November</b>	SMP Pairings Kick-off and Initial Group Call
<b>December</b>	Mentor/Mentee Meetings: Establishing Mentorship Goals
<b>**Mentee-Mentor meetings to continue per schedule established in the Mentorship Agreement &amp; Goals form. At minimum, once every two months.</b>	

<b>March</b>	NVBDC Program Manager Check-ins with Mentor Cohort
<b>March 4, 2026</b>	NVBDC Program Manager Check-ins with Mentee Cohort
<b>June 2, 2026</b>	NVBDC Program Manager Check-ins with Mentor Cohort
<b>June 3, 2026</b>	NVBDC Program Manager Check-ins with Mentee Cohort
<b>October 2026</b>	Final Mentor-Mentee Meeting and Preparation for NVBDC Nationals
<b>October 2026</b>	NVBDC Nationals Program Graduation and Presentations

## **END OF PROGRAM**

At the conclusion of this program, Mentors and Mentees may be asked to participate in a panel or pitch event at NVBDC's annual National Veteran Business Matchmaking Conference to discuss and share their experiences.

## **SUPPLIER MENTORSHIP PROGRAM (SMP) – NEXT STEPS**

- The NVBDC Program Manager will make introductions via email and instruct Mentee to make initial contact with Mentor.
- Upon initial contact with your Mentee, corporate Mentor should discuss ground rules, establish a regular meeting schedule, and review goals. Determine what success looks like for both parties. Get to know each other!
- Complete the Mentorship Agreement & Goals form and return a copy to the NVBDC program manager within 7-10 business days after initial meeting.

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## **APPENDIX A – MENTORSHIP TIPS**

### **I. *Communicate Expectations***

- Clearly understand your expectations for your Mentee and incorporate those in your mentoring relationship's "ground rules."
- Stay flexible in changing expectations or plans.
- Create goals with milestones and deliverables.
- Consider setting up a regular time for meetings.
- If using a team mentoring approach, ensure clarity on who is participating and what the deliverables are.

### **II. *Work Together***

- Recognize your Mentee's areas of opportunity and build on his/her strengths.
- Support and guide without offering easy answers, allowing your Mentee to develop his/her own solutions.
- Offer constructive feedback and adapt your feedback to your Mentee's learning style.
- Advise on what you know and admit the things you don't know. Some questions posed by your Mentee might not be within your scope of knowledge. When this situation arises, share this with your Mentee and find the answer together.
- Challenge and offer hard truths without judging.
- Be a powerful listener by restating or paraphrasing what you have heard from your Mentee, confirming that you understand what has been said.
- Evaluate progress.
- *"There is no "I" in team." Try to promote yourselves as a team. Talk about what **WE** hope to accomplish and how **WE** can work together to achieve **OUR** objectives.*