Mentor/Protégé Program
The 8(a) Business Development (BD) Mentor-Protégé Program is designed to enable successful firms to provide various forms of business development assistance to 8(a) BD Program Participants.

Goal of the Mentor-Protégé Program
The purpose of the 8(a) BD Mentor-Protégé relationship is to:

- Enhance the capabilities of the an 8(a) BD Program Participant (i.e. the protégé firm) by pairing it with an experienced, successful firm (i.e. the mentor)
- Assist the protégé firm with meeting the goals established in its SBA-approved business plan
- Improve the protégé firm’s ability to successfully compete for contracts

Why should small business owners join the Mentor-Protégé Program?

Technical and management assistance
Protégé firms gain access to the mentor’s expertise, resources, and capabilities

Contracting
Mentors can provide assistance relevant to performance of non-8(a) contacts so that protégé firms more fully develop their competitive capabilities. Mentors can enter into joint-venture arrangements with protégés to compete for, and perform on, certain federal government contracts.

Financial assistance in the form of equity and/or loans
Mentors can own up to 40% of the protégé business to help it raise capital.

Who is eligible to enter the Mentor-Protégé Program?

Mentor
A mentor can be any of the following:
- Graduated 8(a) firm
- Current 8(a) firm in the transitional stage
- A small business
- A large business
- A non-profit entity

A mentor entity must:
- Demonstrate a commitment and ability to assist developing an 8(a) BD Program Participant
- Make a commitment to assist its protégé for at least one year.
- Demonstrate ALL of the following:
  - Possess a favorable financial health
  - Possess good character
  - Federal contractor in good standing
  - Can provide valuable assistance to a protégé through lessons learned and/or practical experience gained

Protégé Firm
Pro Tip: 8(a) firms should consult with their SBA District Office Business Opportunity Specialist BEFORE they apply for the Mentor-Protégé Program

Protégé firms must:
- Participate in the 8(a) BD Program
- Meet one of the following conditions
  - Be in development stage of 8(a) BD Program
  - Have never received an 8(a) contract
  - Be less than half the size of the small business size standard corresponding to its primary NAICS code
- Be in good standing with SBA program requirements and current with all SBA reporting requirements
- Pro Tip: Generally, protégés may only have one mentor at a time, but SBA can authorize a second mentor after review.

Pro Tip: Generally, protégés may have only one mentor at a time and vice versa, but SBA can authorize an additional mentor or protégé after review.

What is the process for joining the Mentor-Protégé program?
1. The proposed Mentor and Protégé pairing draft and submit a written agreement to SBA
2. SBA reviews the agreement and determines if it will meet both parties’ needs
3. The written agreement must:
   - Address how the Mentor’s assistance will help the protégé firm meet the goals in its business plan.
   - Establish a single point of contact in the mentor firm responsible for management the agreement
   - Provide assistance for at least one year.
4. If approved, the relationship can begin immediately, with ongoing annual reviews from SBA to determine success of the relationship.

Pro Tip: If a firm doesn’t qualify for the Mentor-Protégé program, the SBA offers a number of other training and educational programs, advisory services, publications, and contract assistance.