



American Corporate Partners

2026 Mentoring Handbook



Dear Protégés and Corporate Mentors,

Welcome to American Corporate Partners' Mentoring Program. ACP is dedicated to assisting veterans, transitioning service members, and active duty military spouses with their career development by creating opportunities for mentoring and networking with professionals from some of the nation's finest corporations and select universities. Our Mentoring Program provides a unique career-development opportunity to those deployed in support of recent US wars, from former service members to current Reservists and National Guardsmen as well as spouses of active duty service members, or those wounded or killed in action.

American Corporate Partners was founded with the following objectives:

- Assist service men and women in their transition from the armed services to private enterprise.
- Provide veterans with opportunities to leverage their military skills and experiences in civilian careers.
- Provide veterans, Guardsmen, and Reservists the opportunity to evaluate and enhance their current civilian career path.
- Develop and strengthen a network of veterans and corporate leaders in the private sector.

Since 2008, ACP has helped thousands of service members take the next steps in their career, and beginning in 2019 we are proud to offer these same career development opportunities to active duty military spouses.

After many years spent in the field of investment banking, I founded ACP not because I believed our returning service members required charity, but out of a sense of appreciation for the sacrifices these men and women - and their families - have made for our country. They have placed their country before themselves, and now it is our turn to contribute to their well-being and the building of their careers.

This handbook is provided as an introduction to mentoring for use by both our Mentors and Protégés. It is my hope that you will find this material useful and use it not as a complete guide, but as a starting point for a mutually beneficial relationship. Thank you for joining our effort and welcome to the program.

Sidney E. Goodfriend
Founder, American Corporate Partners

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WHAT IS A MENTORSHIP?

Mentorships are one-on-one relationships formed to focus on a Protégé's personal growth and long-term professional development. Some of ACP's Protégés have experience in a field and seek a Mentor to assist as they look to take on new responsibilities in a more senior role; or they may be in need of guidance and support while choosing or changing career paths.

ACP's program is not meant to solve every issue or problem, nor is it a "jobs program," but one of several tools available to service members and active duty spouses seeking to enhance their civilian careers.

The role of a Mentor will vary depending upon the goals of the Protégé and the type of support he or she is seeking. In general, mentoring should focus on developing individuals to help them reach their full potential and meet the changing demands of their environment.

ACP believes that Mentors and Protégés will find their experience to be mutually beneficial. Protégés will gain invaluable insight and advice on topics ranging from networking and interviewing to dealing with work-life balance and managing professional relationships. Likewise, Mentors will refine their leadership and coaching skills while giving back to their community and developing a deeper understanding of the issues facing those who have served our country.

A SUCCESSFUL MENTOR MAY ASSUME ANY NUMBER OF ROLES, INCLUDING:

Helps clarify developmental needs; provides feedback on the Protégé's strengths and opportunity areas; helps the protégé build confidence

Helps the Protégé explore issues more deeply by examining, questioning, and openly discussing all aspects of his or her ideas

Explains how corporate America functions; shares critical knowledge; identifies relevant resources; clarifies organizational goals and objectives

Offers the Protégé new perspectives and encourages him or her to take calculated risks

Encourages a two-way exchange of information; listens and responds to concerns; acts as a sounding board

ACP MENTORSHIP COMMITMENT

An ACP Mentorship is a yearlong commitment. ACP's staff pair applicants based primarily on career objectives and professional experience, and secondarily on proximity.

If you are paired in a Local Mentorship and able to meet in person, you are more than welcome to do so. However, this is not mandatory.

If you are paired in a National Mentorship and unable to meet in person, we request pairs communicate at least an hour per month via phone, email, or video-conference. (Please contact ACP if you would like assistance with videoconferencing technology.)

During the year, all pairs should aim to have twelve significant discussions regarding the Protégé's professional development. These discussions will vary based on the Protégé's experience and goals. Possible topics may include résumé building or interview preparation, networking, small business development, work-life balance, and career guidance. See the [Recommended Quarterly Activities](#) list on the ACP website for additional topics or potential mentoring activities.

ACP's staff will contact each participant for updates and feedback over the course of the year. A prompt response is requested to ensure satisfaction of both parties and continued commitment to the mentorship.

OUR PROTÉGÉS

ACP's Protégés come from diverse backgrounds. Nearly 70 percent of our veteran Protégés enlisted and their average age is thirty-five. Some joined the military straight out of high school and are now writing their first civilian résumés, seeking employment, experiencing the jitters of their first job interviews, or attending college. Others are Reservists and National Guardsmen seeking assistance in balancing their military and civilian careers. And we also assist retirees with more than twenty years of service who are looking to make a lateral move into the civilian sector.

95 percent of our active duty military spouse Protégés are female, and their average age is thirty. Most of these Protégés come to us in hopes of finding civilian careers after years of prioritizing their spouses' service to our country. They are often looking to edit their résumés to reflect years of valuable volunteer work, find employment that will accommodate frequent moves, and restore confidence in their professional abilities.

Veterans and their spouses have given a lot of themselves, and they face a variety of challenges during their career transitions. Many are unfamiliar with the language, nuances, and culture of corporate America. Some veterans will struggle to translate their military skills for a civilian audience, while their spouses find difficulty in explaining large gaps in their resumes. One Protégé may know the exact career path s/he wants to follow while another has no idea where to begin. Others aspire to start their own businesses. Protégés may be overseas and looking to get a head start on the transition to a civilian career, adjusting to home life following a recent deployment, or looking to reestablish a career previously put on hold in service of our country.

Mentors should be aware of these challenges and make the best effort to understand them when working with a Protégé to achieve his or her goals.

STARTING YOUR MENTORSHIP

Once you are introduced to your Mentor/Protégé, you should contact each other right away. We recommend setting a date for your first in-person meeting, videoconference, or phone call as soon as possible. You should also discuss your preferred method of communication and general availability.

ACP suggests that Mentors and Protégés spend considerable time getting to know one another. Learning about your partner's interests, work activities, and personality will help establish a solid foundation for your mentorship. It is important to have patience in the development of a dialogue/rapport. It often takes some time for two people, who would otherwise be strangers, to build a relationship.

During the first month of the mentorship, review the Protégé's Career Assessment Questionnaire (CAQ). The CAQ is a valuable tool for jointly assessing and establishing goals for the mentorship. Use it in conjunction with the Action Plan Template to set deliverables and benchmarks for the year. Goals are likely to change over the course of twelve months. **Both mentorship goals and the action plan should be monitored regularly and reassessed when necessary.**

To ensure progress, we recommend that you **conclude each session by establishing the time and date of the next session.** You may wish to create a monthly meeting schedule at the beginning of your mentorship. The schedule should allow for at least twelve significant discussions of the Protégé's professional development to take place during the year.

The following sections offer resources and suggestions for building a successful mentorship. Refer to these throughout the course of the year. You may find the [Recommended Quarterly Activities](#) list on the ACP website an especially helpful source of inspiration as you map out a monthly plan.

IN PREPARING FOR YOUR FIRST MEETING, CONSIDER THESE GENERAL QUESTIONS:

- What are your expectations of the mentorship?
- What would you like to gain from the program?
- What challenges might you face as a pair?
- What are your concerns moving forward in the relationship?
- What are your interests and hobbies?
- What type of career field(s) interests you?
- How should progress be measured?

FOUNDATION FOR A SUCCESSFUL MENTORSHIP

The most effective mentoring relationships are based on a foundation of trust and confidence, where the Protégé feels safe to openly share his or her goals, objectives, and concerns. While every mentoring relationship is different, the following general guidelines are essential for success:

Have Realistic Expectations

Both parties should understand and agree on their expectations for the partnership. Self-awareness is important, and both the Mentor and Protégé should identify what they would like to gain from the program and what they are able to deliver. Articulate these desires to each other and determine realistic goals.

Share Responsibility for the Relationship

Both the Mentor and Protégé need to take ownership of the relationship. Neither should assume it is the other's sole responsibility for arranging meetings. Significant energy and time is required of both parties to create a successful mentorship.

Establish Concrete Goals and Develop an Action Plan

The mentorship should be focused on learning and development with clearly stated goals. Set objectives and benchmarks at the outset and review them frequently as they may change over time.

Communicate and Respect your Partner's Time

No relationship can succeed without clear communication. Show respect for your partner's time by confirming meetings beforehand and always letting your partner know if you are running late or need to reschedule. Protégés should anticipate what they would like to discuss in advance of each meeting.

Keep an Open Mind

Both parties need to be willing to be open and exchange information. Remain open-minded and flexible as your relationship evolves.

Take Ownership of your Career Development

While Mentors may help Protégés develop the necessary tools for success, Protégés must remember that it is up to them to implement these tools. Protégés will need to put in the time and effort required to advance toward achieving their career goals. It is important to keep in mind that success will not come immediately. And while the Mentor can be a valued guide, responsibility for the Protégé's career always belongs to the Protégé.

Be Aware of Differences

Be sensitive to cross-race/cross-gender relationships, different social and educational backgrounds, and different career experiences (e.g., military vs. civilian).

RESOURCES AND TROUBLESHOOTING

ACP believes the mentoring relationship should evolve primarily between the Mentor and Protégé. However, several support structures are in place to strengthen and guide the mentorship.

ACP STAFF

First and foremost, your relationship with ACP's staff can be a collaborative and consultative one. ACP Operations Associates are here to assist you and provide guidance, support, and encouragement throughout the year. Associates will communicate with each participant on a regular basis to monitor the progress of the relationship, offer suggestions, and help troubleshoot if issues arise; but do not hesitate to contact them between updates. From time to time, a Mentor or Protégé may become unresponsive or show a lack of commitment. Should this happen, please contact your Operations Associate for assistance in resolving the situation.

ACP RESOURCE CENTER

In addition to this handbook, ACP's online [Resource Center](#) offers a variety of support for both Protégés and Mentors. Visit the site for employment, professional development, small business, and military resources; Mentorship Conversation Starters; book recommendations; and mentorship tips for working with a Guardsman/Reservist, student, or newly employed Protégé. You can download the Career Assessment Questionnaire and Action Plan Template from the Resource Center as well. Utilize the questionnaire to establish goals and then develop an action plan to achieve them. Revisit these documents frequently to refine objectives or assess progress.

ACP ON THE WEB

ACP has a vibrant presence on social media, offering resources, updates, and a sense of community across various platforms.

Follow us on [LinkedIn](#), including our group [ACP Connects](#), to connect with other participants regionally and nationally.

Stay informed by liking our [Facebook page](#) and joining our [Military Spouse Facebook Group](#), where you'll find tailored support.

For career insights and highlights, follow us on [Instagram](#).

Military-connected entrepreneurs can also join [ACP Village](#) for resources and networking.

For assistance, contact info@acp-usa.org.

If your mentorship needs reenergizing at any point, please contact ACP's staff or visit the Resource Center for inspiration. Over the course of the year, some pairs may experience slow periods, a change of course, or difficulty connecting. ACP offers dozens of ways to keep your mentorship strong and focused. And ACP's staff is always available to assist with any issues or difficulties you may experience.

RECOMMENDED QUARTERLY PROGRAM

ACP strongly recommends that at the outset of the mentorship Mentors and Protégés jointly develop an action plan that focuses on achieving specific goals and objectives over the course of a year. Ideally, pairs will spend time together each month to allow for at least twelve significant discussions of the Protégé's professional development. Objectives should be reassessed when necessary and the achievement of benchmarks monitored quarterly.

Every mentorship is different and relationships vary based on individual goals and experiences. Below you will find one example of a quarterly framework for the yearlong program.

QUARTER 1: CAREER ASSESSMENT AND OBJECTIVES

Set goals and a plan of action to achieve them early in the mentorship using the Career Assessment Questionnaire. Protégés should be honest and realistic about their needs and objectives, and Mentors will need to recognize what they can deliver before committing to a particular outcome. ACP recommends the remainder of the initial quarter be spent building a relationship in which both parties get to know each other beyond their professional experiences and career goals. Protégés may also want to discuss their experiences as service members or military spouses to help Mentors gain general knowledge about military life.

QUARTER 2: NETWORKING ENRICHMENT

Many Protégés will benefit from being introduced to others within the Mentor's corporation- to learn about different lines of work or to meet additional role models who offer alternative perspectives on the Protégé's objectives. Ideally, the Protégé will be introduced to three other professionals from the Mentor's corporation during this quarter.

QUARTER 3: JOB PREPARATION AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

ACP recommends that Mentors offer assistance with various skills required of Protégés who will be applying for a job or building a career. Examples may include: third-party skill assessment, personality typing, résumé review, interview training, and public speaking. Mentors may wish to engage their Human Resources department for assistance with these activities. Pairs should revisit the Career Assessment Questionnaire at the beginning of the third quarter to assess if goals have changed.

QUARTER 4: PROGRAM RECAP AND PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING

The final quarter should commence with a review of the Protégé's original Career Assessment Questionnaire to determine if objectives are on a path toward being realized. The remainder of the quarter may be best spent by the Mentor assisting the Protégé in building a professional network. Ideally, the Mentor will introduce the Protégé to three professionals from outside the Mentor's corporation. Pairs may wish to discuss ways the Protégé can continue to develop professionally beyond the yearlong program.

At the end of the year, Mentors and Protégés should discuss how often and if they will communicate moving forward. While ACP will not continue to formally monitor and support the relationship, we encourage you to stay in touch, perhaps on a more informal basis (emailing occasionally and scheduling coffee, lunch, or a phone call every few months). The resources offered at acp-usa.org and on [ACP Village](#) will remain available to participants looking for continued professional development, business advice, and networking.

RECOMMENDED QUARTERLY PROGRAM FOR ACP VENTURES

The entrepreneurial pathway involves unique challenges and opportunities, whether one is just beginning to explore entrepreneurship or is already in the early stages of launching a business. This mentorship framework aims to support Veterans and Active-Duty Military Spouses through their unique entrepreneurial journeys. Like the corporate pathway, it is crucial that Mentors and Protégés develop a comprehensive action plan at the outset and regularly revisit goals and progress.

QUARTER 1: VISION AND BUSINESS PLANNING

Self-Assessment: Assist Protégés in evaluating their interest in and readiness for entrepreneurship. Discuss their motivations, skills, and experiences to determine if entrepreneurship aligns with their personal and professional goals.

Idea Generation: For those leaning towards entrepreneurship, help in brainstorming and refining business ideas. Use tools such as the Business Model Canvas or free [Business Planning Templates](#) to outline the business concept, target market, value proposition, revenue model and initial strategy.

Preliminary Research: Guide Protégés in conducting preliminary market research to explore the viability of their business ideas. This includes identifying potential market needs, initial competitors and target customer segments.

QUARTER 2: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND NETWORKING

Business Development: Assist Protégés in developing their business infrastructure. This may involve them setting up legal structures, creating a marketing plan, or establishing an online presence. Focus on critical business skills such as budgeting, financial planning and operations.

Networking Enrichment: Introduce Protégés to relevant contacts in your network who can provide advice or opportunities. Encourage them to join and participate in the [ACP Village](#).

Feedback and Adjustment: Review the progress made on the business plan. Provide constructive feedback and help Protégés adjust their strategies based on new information or feedback received.

QUARTER 3: JOB PREPARATION AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Growth Strategy: Focus on strategies for scaling the business. Discuss topics such as customer acquisition, sales strategies and scaling operations. Consider using case studies or examples of successful startups to illustrate key points. You can utilize the resources below. More case study resources can also be found in the [Village Resource Library](#).

- [3 Inspiring Stories of Successful Startups](#)
- [Entrepreneurship Case Study: Checkr](#)
- [Entrepreneurship Case Study: Managed By Q](#)

Skill Enhancement: Help Protégés develop critical entrepreneurial skills such as negotiation, leadership and effective communication. Provide resources or suggest training programs to strengthen these skills.

Funding and Resources: Assist Protégés in exploring funding options, including grants, loans or venture capital. Provide guidance on preparing pitches or proposals if needed.

QUARTER 4: PROGRAM RECAP AND PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING

Program Review: Revisit the business plan and initial goals. Assess progress, celebrate achievements and identify any remaining challenges. Adjust the business strategy as necessary.

Future Planning: Discuss long-term goals and strategies for continued growth and development. Explore opportunities for further mentorship, professional development or business scaling.

ONE-YEAR ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

This template is meant to be used in tandem with ACP's Mentoring Handbook, Career Assessment Questionnaire, and Recommended Quarterly Activities. Examples and suggestions below should serve as a rough guide.

Section 1: Career & Professional Goals and Objectives	
Short-term Goals (1-2 years)	Long-term Goals (2-5 years)

Section 2: Month-to-Month Action Plan			
	Meeting Date	Objectives/Goals	Strategies/Tactics
<i>Example</i>	<i>Jan 1, 2012</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify top three short-term and long-term goals. • Identify professional strengths and opportunities for growth (taking military background into account). • Use this worksheet to create a plan of action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review completed Career Assessment Questionnaire. • Mentor and Protégé: Take the Jung Typology Test and discuss individual results together.
Month 1:			
Month 2:			
Month 3:			

ONE-YEAR ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE, CONT.

Section 2: Month-to-Month Action Plan			
	Meeting Date	Objectives/Goals	Strategies/Tactics
Month 4:			
Month 5:			
Month 6:			
Month 7:			
Month 8:			
Month 9:			
Month 10:			
Month 11:			
Month 12:			