

Chapter 6

Mentorship and Sponsorship

Facilitator Notes

Chapter 6 focuses on mentorship and sponsorship, highlighting the vital role they play in creating equitable, inclusive, and sustainable career pathways in architecture. Participants will explore definitions, dynamics, and strategies to engage as mentees, mentors, sponsors, and allies.

What this guide includes:

- Definitions and distinctions between mentorship, sponsorship, coaching, and allyship.
- Equity challenges in access and power dynamics.
- Responsibilities and actions for mentees, mentors, sponsors, and firms.
- Sample scenarios and reflection prompts.

Use this outline to:

- Clarify roles and expectations in mentoring relationships.
- Foster career development across identities and levels.
- Support equitable access to advancement opportunities.
- Promote a culture of mentorship and sponsorship.

Suggested Pre-Read:

- To maximize engagement and discussion, participants should read the corresponding chapters one page, [Executive Summary](#).

Corresponding Learning

Attendees will be able to:

- Define mentorship, sponsorship, coaching, and allyship and explain how they differ.
- Identify barriers to access for underrepresented groups and ways to overcome them.
- Describe strategies that support inclusive mentorship and sponsorship.
- Apply individual and organizational actions that foster equitable development pathways.

SLIDE 2 MENTORSHIP & SPONSORSHIP

- Mentors and, increasingly, sponsors (who use political capital to promote a protégé) are invaluable for career advancement; when they are seen as allies as well, they can help diversify workplaces and build inclusiveness.
- This guide provides background and guidance on the value and practice of mentorship and sponsorship from the standpoint of individual mentors and mentees, sponsors and protégés, and firms and organizations that develop formal and informal programs.

Notes

1. **What do you hope to get out of today?**
 2. **Why is this topic important to you or your firm?**
 3. **Set expectations for rules of engagement.**
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SLIDE 3 DEFINITIONS & ROLES

Role	Where do they come from?	What do they offer?	How do they offer it?
Mentors “Give”	Professional networks, education, workplace. Can be formal or informal.	Professional guidance, insight, and feedback.	Through discussion, networking, helping to navigate challenges.
Sponsors “Invest”	Typically initiated by the sponsor, often senior leaders.	Career advocates, skill building, and important connections.	Provide protection and support and take professional risks on behalf of their protégés.
Coach “Facilitate” or “Support”	Often contracted for a specific time to achieve specific results. Might be from outside the profession.	Structured methods to address goals and improve job performance.	Conducts coaching sessions that increase self-awareness and support desired change.
Ally “Advocate”	Someone in a position of privilege, often from the dominant culture.	Support to historically underrepresented colleagues.	Use standing or credibility to spread awareness and advocate for equity and inclusion.

Notes

1. **You cannot declare yourself to be an ally. The term should be given to you by someone from the community in which you are an ally.**
2. **Who has experience with these different roles?**
3. **What made that experience impactful?**
4. **Can one person serve multiple roles? What are some examples?**

SLIDE 4 EQUITY & ACCESS

- Power imbalances are inherent in all mentor and sponsor relationships. Individuals' identity groups can tip the scale either way.
- Bias, affinity preferences, and underrepresentation affect selection and outcomes.
- Access to mentors and sponsors can vary by identity group.
- Formal mentorship programs can offset these inequities by incorporating training in allyship and intercultural competence.

Notes

1. **Cross-identity mentorship: What might be some dynamics in a mentor-mentee relationship when the mentor has a typically less-powerful identity, such as a woman mentoring a man, or a person of color mentoring a white person?**
 2. **When comparing those who mentor men with those who mentor women, those who mentor men often hold higher positions and often expand their role as mentor into sponsor.**¹
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SLIDE 5 WHY MENTORSHIP AND SPONSORSHIP MATTER

- These relationships improve access to power, promotions, compensation, and meaningful assignments. They build confidence, security, and skill development while enhancing overall job satisfaction. Mentorship and sponsorship also help retain diverse talent and promote inclusive firm culture.

Notes

Compared to those who neither give nor receive sponsorship or mentorship—

1. **Women and people of color with sponsors or mentors are more likely to seek out “stretch assignments”**²
 2. **Mentees are promoted five times more often than those without a mentor.**
 3. **Mentors are promoted six times more often than those who do not mentor junior staff.**³
 4. **Although 70% of women are hesitant to ask for a raise, women with sponsors are 27% more likely to seek one.**⁴
 5. **Formal mentoring programs attract candidates and increase the firm's recruitment yield.**
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SLIDE 6 WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE**Notes**

1. **Review each example of what good looks like. Make a check mark next to practices that you can find in your firm or organization, a question mark for those where you are not sure, and a minus for those that are missing.**
2. **What areas are strong, which are you not sure about, and which areas are weak?**
3. **Ask for volunteers to share examples.**
4. **What can you do to influence change?**

SLIDE 7 ACTIONS FOR MENTEES & PROTÉGÉS

- Reflect on your goals, career path, and identity to determine mentors who will be a good fit.
- Understand the different kinds of mentorship relationships and programs that exist so that you can commit appropriately. Take the commitment seriously so that you will be taken seriously.
- Seek out mentors and sponsors by asking questions, engaging, and being able to articulate your aspirations and concerns.
- Mentorship relationships are not exclusive. You can have more than one mentor, and they can have more than one mentee. Think of it as like having your own personal “board of directors.”

Notes

1. What are the most important traits in a mentor or sponsor for you?
 2. What ground rules or boundaries would you set in your mentoring relationships?
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SLIDE 8 ACTIONS FOR MENTORS & SPONSORS

- Reflect on your own experiences—career challenges, achievements, and your identities—and how those might influence the mentor or sponsor relationship.
- Understand your availability and expectations and seek opportunities that align. For example, K-12 mentorships are often shorter-term commitments that support a more diverse future architecture profession.
- Develop mentoring skills related to intercultural competence, active listening, communication, and goal setting to strengthen relationships and outcomes.
- Be open to reciprocal mentoring, recognizing that mentees possess a wealth of skills and knowledge.

Notes

1. How might implicit bias affect mentor/mentee pairings?
 2. Go beyond “rising stars” and referrals—consider who might be overlooked.
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SLIDE 9 ACTIONS TO SUPPORT FIRM-LEVEL MENTORSHIP

- Consider creating a formal mentorship program linked to business goals, and recognize mentors and sponsors who devote time to mentorship. Allow time during business hours to support engagement.
- Train in intercultural competence and allyship to support mentor-mentee relationships that cross cultures and identities.
- Notice who is participating in mentorship programs. Be aware that mentors from underrepresented groups may have greater than usual demands on their time and attention.

Notes

1. What support does your firm offer to mentors?
2. How would you measure the success of a mentorship program?

SLIDE 10 CONSIDER SCENARIOS & REFLECTIONS

Notes

1. **Select a scenario from the chapter that you feel will resonate with the group. Ask a volunteer to read it aloud. Discuss the discussion prompts in small groups and share with the full group.**
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SLIDE 11 NOW WHAT?

- What is one action you will take as a mentor, mentee, or sponsor?

Notes

1. **Give everyone the option to share.**
 2. **Suggest they check in with a peer or accountability partner one month later.**
 3. **Note that there are many more ideas for action and additional scenarios in the full chapter.**
 4. **If you have specific resources, committees, or additional worksheets, you can promote those here.**
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1. Center for Women and Business, *Mentorship, Sponsorship, and Networks*.
2. Center for Women and Business, *Mentorship, Sponsorship, and Networks*; and David A. Thomas, "Race Does Matter in Mentoring," Working Knowledge, May 2001, hbswk.hbs.edu/item/race-does-matter-in-mentoring.
3. "Mentoring," *Parlour Guides to Equitable Practice*.
4. Center for Women and Business, *Mentorship, Sponsorship, and Networks*.
5. Tammy D. Allen and Kimberly E. O'Brien, "Formal Mentoring Programs and Organizational Attraction," *Human Resource Development Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (Spring 2006), <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/hrdq.1160>.