

# MENTORSHIP

## A HANDBOOK

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**GENDER CHAMPIONS** IN NUCLEAR POLICY

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## **What is a Mentor?**

A mentor is an experienced and knowledgeable person who advises a less experienced or knowledgeable person. Traditionally this has meant mentorship of younger professionals by their more senior peers, however the modern theory of mentorship emphasizes that mentorship can occur between two people at any point in their careers. In the field of international security, mentors and mentees may work within different communities of practice while contributing positively to one another's professional development. Anyone can be a mentor, but to maximize the value and impact of a mutually beneficial mentor-mentee relationship both parties should consider their desired outcomes as well as some best practices.

## **Why Mentorship?**

Studies show that mentorship is key to the development of a diverse, resilient talent pipeline and critical to employee retention and satisfaction. Mentors provide access to networks, professional development opportunities, a social support system, and much more. Input from a trusted mentor can be formative professional experience, helping to chart the course ahead, overcome challenges, and develop complex skills like servant leadership and strategic foresight.

Mentees make equally important contributions to their mentors, keeping mentors in touch with emerging perspectives and challenging long-held beliefs or assumptions about their field. Often mentees bring skills or experiences to the table that are new or unfamiliar to mentors, creating opportunities for mentors to grow and develop their own understanding.

Within an organization, the intentional practice of mentorship promotes an inclusive environment that better distributes the benefits of professional development and contributes to employee satisfaction. Historically, women and black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) have faced greater professional obstacles and benefited from fewer formal and informal opportunities for advancement and development. Mentorship is an essential tool in overcoming these obstacles by connecting diverse perspectives, opening doors to new opportunities, and creating social support systems.

## **Why Be a Mentor?**

The most effective mentors are individuals who seek out opportunities to participate in mentorship because of their own organic interest. These mentors are most likely to be motivated to consider the needs and lived experience of their mentees – mandatory mentorship is ineffective and can lead to negative experiences.

Studies show that effective mentorship can instill a sense of belonging in participants both within an organization and a professional community. Serving as a mentor is a positive contribution toward making the international security community more diverse, inclusive, and welcoming to both new entrants and current members. A healthier, more diverse professional community is more effective at achieving its goals and more likely to attract top talent.

## **Mentorship Best Practices**

## For Mentors

- Be prepared to devote adequate time to your new role as a mentor; making yourself available to your mentee is of primary importance.
- Consider using an accountability framework like [SMARTIE goals](#) in collaboration with your mentee to help define goals and track progress.
- Follow through on commitments or renegotiate appropriately; when mentees feel like an afterthought, they are likely to be discouraged and disengage from the relationship.
- Advocate for your organization to pay interns, establish formal mentorship programs, and promote professional development opportunities at all levels. Understand that there is an inherent power disparity in your relationship with a mentee regardless of their level of professional experience.
- Understand that your mentee might not know relevant questions to ask or next steps to take. You should be willing to offer an active helping hand while leaving space for your mentee to ask their own questions.
- Mentors have extremely valuable experience to share outside of how they've advanced their careers; life skills, navigating a professional community, finding opportunities, and balancing work with other responsibilities may all be of interest to a mentee.
- For mid-career mentees, consider providing feedback on skills and habits in complex practices like team leadership. This kind of feedback is hard to come by but provides important course correction.

## For Mentees

- The role of a mentor is not to “fix” problems. Instead, their role is to help you consider various options and devise your own solutions.
- Consider using an accountability framework like [SMARTIE goals](#) in collaboration with your mentor to help define goals and track progress.
- Take the initiative to make the most out of your mentorship experience; be prepared to manage logistics and scheduling where possible.
- Follow through on commitments or renegotiate appropriately; you are accountable to yourself and to your mentor.
- Provide your mentor with honest feedback – openness will improve your mentorship experience and help your mentor to provide you with guidance that works for you.
- Get to know your mentor and let them get to know you. Building a strong mentor-mentee relationship creates a safe space for sharing and allows you both to benefit more from the experience.

## For Organizations

- Mentoring programs should be tracked, measured, and assessed. Metrics and feedback can be captured throughout the program cycle. Even if a program is informal, the act of reporting progress will help participants stay productive. Consider using an accountability framework like [SMARTIE goals](#).
- Continually champion your mentorship program, highlighting successes and sharing inspiring mentoring stories. Consider a formal recognition strategy that champions mentors and encourages new ones to volunteer.
- Provide opportunities for honest and anonymous feedback from mentees.
- Mentorship programs should be open to voluntary participation; requiring mandatory participation sets the wrong tone and often results in negative experiences.
- Ensure that mentors are properly trained and prepared for the new role that they are taking on; this may include considerations like liability, conversation guides, and conduct guidelines.

- In formal mentorship programs, develop a system for pairing mentors with mentees based on goals, professional experience, or interests. Consider carefully what makes for a good mentor-mentee pair.

## Mentorship Opportunities

- [En Voz Alta](#): Women's Action for New Directions (WAND) hosts a signature mentorship program for Latina women in the field of peace and security. WAND recruits both mentors and mentees; mentees are early-career professionals or undergraduate/graduate students.
- [Girl Security](#): Girl Security seeks to close the gender gap in national security through learning, training, and mentoring support for girls.
- [Stanley Center Accelerator Initiative](#): The Stanley Center for Peace and Security offers a yearlong mentorship and professional development program for early-career women working in nuclear, international security, or technology policy.
- [Young Women in Nonproliferation Initiative](#): The James Martin Center for Non-Proliferation Studies hosts a mentorship program for women in undergraduate programs with an interest in careers in nonproliferation.
- [WCAPS Mentorship Program](#): Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security, and Conflict Transformation (WCAPS) hosts a mentorship program offering in-person or remote meetings between mentors and mentees. Participants must be members of WCAPS.
- [Women in International Security](#): Women in International Security provides an interactive member platform to promote mentorship and networking opportunities.
- [Women Transforming Our Nuclear Legacy \(WTONL\)](#): WTONL aims to change our nuclear future by fostering a new generation of women leaders in peacebuilding, nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament.
- [The Emerging Leaders in Biosecurity \(ELBI\)](#): ELBI's Fellowship inspires and connects the next generation of leaders and innovators in the biosecurity community.
- [Younger Generation Leaders Network on Euro-Atlantic Security \(YGLN\)](#): The YGLN is composed of 90 members in their early careers who are rising stars and specialists in security policy, economics, journalism, law and civil society.
- [The AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellowships](#): AAAS' Fellowship program provides opportunities for scientists and engineers to contribute to federal policymaking while learning firsthand about the intersection of science and policy.
- [iGEM Foundation](#): The iGEM Foundation is an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of synthetic biology, education and competition, and the development of an open community and collaboration. The iGEM Competition gives students the opportunity to push the boundaries of synthetic biology by tackling everyday issues facing the world.
- [The Next Generation Network](#): The Next Generation Network engages and facilitates contributions by emerging scholars, scientists, and professionals from government and non-governmental institutions to the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) and other global health security projects.

## Relevant Organizations

- [#NatSecGirlSquad](#): Leadership: Maggie Feldman-Piltch

- [Gender Champions in Nuclear Policy](#): Leadership: Michelle Dover & Laura Holgate
- [Foreign Policy Interrupted](#): Leadership: Elmira Bayrasli & Lauren Bohn
- [Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security & Conflict Transformation](#): Leadership: Bonnie Jenkins
- [Women in Defense](#): Leadership: Rachel McCaffrey
- [Women in International Security](#): Leadership: Chantal de Jonge Oudraat
- [U.S. Women in Nuclear](#): Leadership: Jhansi Kandasamy
- [Women's Action for New Directions](#): Leadership: Nancy Parrish
- [Women's Foreign Policy Network](#): Leadership: Jenna Ben-Yehuda
- [Out in National Security](#): Leadership: Lucas Schleusner, Shawn Skelly

## Further Reading

### On the Importance of Mentorship

- [Does mentoring matter? A multidisciplinary meta-analysis comparing mentored and non-mentored individuals](#) Study by Lilian T, Eby, Tammy D. Allen, Sarah C. Evans, Thomas Ng, and David DuBois
- [Can mentoring programs improve the diversity pipeline?](#) Article by Kevin Howell
- [The key to diversity and inclusion is mentorship](#) Article by Janice Gassam Asare
- [The lifelong benefits of mentorship](#) Article by Brendan L. Smith
- [Mentoring as a career development tool: A universal resource or only for the 'anointed'?](#) Study by The Association of Learned & Professional Society Publishers
- [Mentoring research and best practices white paper](#) Findings by the University of Alabama
- [Mentorship and allyship: Navigating toward diversity and inclusion](#) Article by Aisha Thomas-Petit
- [Why mentors matter: A summary of 30 years of research](#) Study by Lauren Bidwell

### On the Importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in International Security

- [Federal agency finds success in group mentoring program](#) Study by Mindy Zasloff and Mary Ellen Okurowski
- [From college to Cabinet: Women in national security](#) Study by CNS
- [Let's resolve to add more women of color in national security](#) Article by Bishop Garrison
- [Nevertheless, she persisted... parity in national security](#) Project by Deborah M. McGrath. See page 19.
- [On allyship and mentorship in the national security sector](#) Essay by Jeessue Lee and Brittney Washington