



2025-26

MENTORSHIP

PROGRAM

HANDBOOK



2025-26 MENTORSHIP PROGRAM DETAILS AND GUIDELINES

Professional development and relationship building is at the core of NCEDA's mission, and **mentorship** is a key opportunity for NCEDA members to engage and learn from each other in a meaningful way. The NCEDA Emerging Executives Initiative is excited to announce the 2025-26 NCEDA Mentorship Program! **The application period is open August 25 – September 12, 2025.**

If you are an experienced practitioner or allied, apply to be a **mentor** and coach someone through a challenging project, advise on a career move, or be a sounding board for new ideas. If you are new to economic development, apply to be a **mentee** to find help with common project obstacles and have support in the advancement of your career. **This Mentorship Program is open to all NCEDA members.**

Objectives

- This nine (9) month mentorship program aims to support those that are new to the field of economic development, including practitioners and allies as well as experts in the industry wanting to give back
- To establish a trusting relationship with accountability and responsibility between the mentor and mentee
- At the conclusion of the nine (9) month mentorship program, each mentor and mentee will have the option to end or continue with the existing mentorship relationship and/or program

Outline

This is a nine (9) month commitment from October 2025 – June 2026:

- **August/September:** Application Submission
- **Mid-September:** Application Review / Pairings
- **Late September:** Virtual Introductions and Orientation
 - Set expectations and determine communication preference (email, phone, virtual, and/or in-person)
- **October:** Kickoff Reception for Mentors/Mentees at Fall Conference
- **November – May:** Monthly Check-Ins
 - Expectation for one-hour meetings each month (virtual or in-person)
- **Mid-February:** Midway Point Virtual Check-In for Mentors and Mentees (calendar invitation will be sent mid-late January)
- **June:** Mentorship Program Celebration at Annual Conference

Criteria

- Applicants must be members of NCEDA for the duration of the program.
- Applicants must be committed for the full nine-month period (*October 2025 – June 2026*).

Mentorship Program Benefits

- Encourage professional and personal development
- Increase confidence and identify career goals
- Develop deeper relationships with other industry professionals
- Build a stronger field of North Carolina economic development professionals who will continue to bring prosperity to all parts of our state

Mentor Characteristics

- Be available – provide your time, experience, encouragement, feedback, and advice
- Be an active listener – be attentive and remove potential distractions from your conversation
- Build on your mentee's strengths and give constructive feedback
- Be on time for meetings
- Be willing to admit you do not have all the answers, but offer to assist
- Be understanding
- Be approachable
- Take ownership of the relationship
- Help guide your mentee to identify realistic, attainable goals
- Share your experiences
- Celebrate successes
- Have fun

Mentee Characteristics

- Be available
- Take ownership of the relationship
- Be open and honest – tell your mentor what you need from the relationship
- Be respectful of your Mentor's time
- Be approachable
- Have fun

Mentor Relationship Phases

It is important to establish a clear understanding of expectations at the first meeting. Each party should come prepared for all meetings so the relationship can develop smoothly.

Purpose	Engagement	Growth	Completion
Establish Compatibility	Build Rapport and Trust	Build Skills	Offer Reflection
Set Expectations	Clarify Expectations	Overcome Barriers to Growth	Build Confidence to Continue Growing
	Become Acquainted	Develop Growth Mindset	Pay it Forward
	Celebrate Milestones	Explore Accountability	
		Provide Feedback	

Mentee: Build An Action Plan with Assistance from the Mentor

The mentee should brainstorm up to four career or work-related objectives (goals) to work on during the mentorship program. Together, you and your mentor should develop a plan of action to reach these objectives. Your mentor should help you determine where to focus and how best to accomplish these goals. Complete the form below for each goal early in the process, and continuously update it as needed.

Example:

***Objective:** Improve weekly staff meetings with my team.*

***Action Steps:** Identify current friction points to improve; Create weekly agenda template; Assign roles in team meetings; and create a system for follow-ups after meetings*

Objectives (Goals)	Action Steps
Objective #1:	
Objective #2:	
Objective #3:	
Objective #4:	

Mentee Skills Inventory Guide

Instructions: Review each skill in column one. In the next columns, indicate how comfortable you are in using each skill by checking **V (very comfortable)**, **M (moderately comfortable)**, or **U (uncomfortable)**. In column five, identify a concrete situation when you were either comfortable or uncomfortable using the skill. Insert a checkmark in column six for each skill you feel needs improvement.

SKILLS	V	M	U	EXAMPLES	NEEDS WORK
Establishing Relationships with Public Sector/Elected Officials					
Being an Active Listener					
Relationship Building					
Initiating Conversation					
Keeping Agreements					
Operating from my Strengths					
Having a Positive Attitude					
Being Values-Centered					
Knowing my Vision/Purpose					
Having Emotional Intelligence					
Building Positive Habits					
Effective Goal Setting					
Taking Action Consistently					
Managing Time/Projects					
Being an Effective Communicator					
Welcoming Feedback					
Being a Change Agent					
Adapting to Change					
Having Problem-Solving Skills					
Having Self-Motivation					

Resolving Conflict					
Having Self-Reflection / Ability to Assess Self-Performance					
Being Resourceful					
Having Resilience in Light of Setbacks					

Mentorship Program Conversation Starter Questions

Instructions: These questions are optional but can help initiate conversations between the mentor and mentee.

1. Have you ever been involved in a mentoring relationship? What did you learn from that experience?
2. What would success look like for you?
3. What are the biggest challenges you're facing in your role right now?
4. Are there any skills you are struggling with or would like to improve?
5. What areas do you feel you need to work on or skills you need to develop to advance in your career?
6. What kind of feedback have you received recently, and how have you acted on it?
7. Looking back over the past year, what accomplishments are you most proud of?
8. Are there any upcoming opportunities or projects you'd like to get involved in?
9. What motivates you to stay engaged and productive in your work?
10. Where did you go to school?
11. What was your path to Economic Development?
12. What areas of Economic Development would you like to learn more about?
13. What areas of the profession have had a meaningful impact on your life?
14. What books, articles, and/or podcasts have you used to get a better understanding of this profession?
15. What unique life experience(s) has shaped your career path?
16. What are some tools you've used to deal with stressful situations?

Mentorship Program Monthly Agendas

Instructions: These agendas are optional but are designed to help kickstart monthly conversations between mentors and mentees.

Month 1 (October 2025): Kickoff & Goal Setting

Focus: Building rapport & setting expectations

Objectives:

- Get to know each other
- Clarify goals and expectations
- Establish communication style and meeting cadence

Discussion Prompts:

- What do you hope to gain from this mentorship?
- What's your background and current role?
- What's your preferred way to communicate and receive feedback?

Meeting Agenda Template:

1. Icebreaker / introductions
2. Discuss background and professional journeys
3. Outline mentorship expectations
4. Establish goals using **SMART** framework to help set effective, achievable goals:
 - **Specific:** Clear, well-defined, and unambiguous.
 - **Measurable:** With specific criteria that measure your progress.
 - **Achievable:** Attainable and not impossible to achieve.
 - **Relevant:** Aligned with broader objectives or career path.
 - **Time-bound:** With a clearly defined deadline or time frame.

SMART Goal Template: Use this table to define and track your SMART goals:

Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Relevant	Time-bound

5. Review the next steps and confirm the next meeting

Month 2 (November 2025): Self-Awareness & Strengths

Focus: Personal values, strengths, and growth areas

Objectives:

- Build self-awareness
- Understand natural talents
- Identify areas for improvement

Discussion Prompts:

- What are your top strengths?
- What feedback have you received in the past?
- How do your strengths help or hinder you?

Meeting Agenda Template:

1. Review progress since last meeting
 2. Review Skills Inventory
 3. Identify development areas
 4. Assign action steps for next meeting
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Month 3 (December 2025): Career Development Planning

Focus: Career path exploration and planning

Objectives:

- Clarify long-term career vision
- Identify skills or experiences needed
- Align current actions with future goals

Discussion Prompts:

- What's your 3–5 year career goal?
- What's holding you back from your next step?
- What skills would help you advance?

Meeting Agenda Template:

1. Review SMART goal progress
 2. Discuss long-term career aspirations
 3. Identify skill or experience gaps
 4. Agree on next developmental actions
 5. Schedule a check-in point
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Month 4 (January 2026): Communication & Influence

Focus: Enhancing communication effectiveness

Objectives:

- Improve verbal and written communication
- Learn to adapt to different styles
- Build confidence in giving/receiving feedback

Discussion Prompts:

- How do you adapt your message for different audiences?
- When was a time you communicated really well—or poorly?
- How do you handle conflict?

Meeting Agenda Template:

1. Discuss recent communication experiences
 2. Practice giving or receiving feedback
 3. Review or role-play common scenarios
 4. Identify 1–2 communication habits to improve
 5. Plan next steps
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Month 5 (February 2026): Leadership & Decision-Making

Focus: Developing a leadership mindset

Objectives:

- Define what leadership means personally
- Build confidence in decision-making
- Practice accountability and ownership

Discussion Prompts:

- What leadership traits do you admire?
- When have you had to step up as a leader?
- How do you approach tough decisions?

Meeting Agenda Template:

1. Share examples of leadership moments
 2. Review decision-making frameworks
 3. Discuss accountability and initiative
 4. Define a leadership goal for the year
 5. Follow up on any shadowing or reading
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Month 6 (March 2026): Networking & Relationship Building

Focus: Building meaningful professional connections

Objectives:

- Improve networking comfort and skills
- Learn how to nurture professional relationships
- Leverage networks for opportunities

Discussion Prompts:

- How do you currently network?
- Who's in your "go-to" circle professionally?
- How do you follow up after meeting someone new?

Meeting Agenda Template:

1. Review current networking habits
 2. Brainstorm strategies for relationship-building
 3. Share event or networking opportunities
 4. Role-play outreach or introductions
 5. Set a networking goal for the month
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Month 7 (April 2026): Problem Solving & Strategic Thinking

Focus: Critical thinking and adaptability

Objectives:

- Enhance problem-solving approach
- Apply frameworks to real situations
- Learn from failures and pivots

Discussion Prompts:

- What's a recent challenge you've faced?
- How do you approach solving complex problems?
- How do you measure the success of a decision?

Meeting Agenda Template:

1. Discuss a recent or upcoming challenge
 2. Apply a problem-solving model
 3. Brainstorm multiple solutions
 4. Reflect on what success would look like
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Month 8 (May 2026): Personal Brand & Visibility

Focus: Reputation management and presence

Objectives:

- Define personal brand
- Improve visibility in your field
- Prepare for advancement opportunities

Discussion Prompts:

- How would others describe your professional presence?
- What's on your LinkedIn or digital footprint?
- Where do you want to be seen or heard?

Meeting Agenda Template:

1. Reflect on your current brand and visibility
 2. Review personal materials (LinkedIn, bios, etc.)
 3. Craft or refine an elevator pitch
 4. Set visibility goals (one new platform, presentation, etc.)
 5. Commit to one visibility action
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Month 9 (June 2026): Reflection & Celebration

Focus: Review, reflect, and celebrate achievements

Objectives:

- Reflect on growth and progress
- Celebrate wins
- Plan next steps after the program

Discussion Prompts:

- What are you most proud of from this experience?
- What has changed since Month 1?
- What are your next steps?

Meeting Agenda Template:

1. Reflect on goals and growth
 2. Share lessons learned
 3. Celebrate progress and success
 4. Identify future areas of development
 5. Exchange final feedback and stay-in-touch plan
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Optional Meeting Agenda Idea

Focus: Applying and Interviewing

Objectives:

- Review and refine mentee's resume and cover letter.
- Discuss best practices for tailoring application materials to specific roles.
- Practice responding to common interview questions with clarity and confidence.

Discussion Prompts:

- What job(s) are you targeting with your resume?
- How does your resume reflect your most relevant strengths?
- What's the biggest challenge you face when writing cover letters?
- How do you usually prepare for interviews?
- Are there particular interview questions you find difficult?

Meeting Agenda Template:

1. Resume Review
 - Discuss strengths and gap
 - Suggest improvements and formatting tips
2. Cover Letter Writing
 - Brainstorm themes or key messages
 - Review structure and personalize to job description
3. Interview Preparation
 - Practice 2–3 common questions (mock interview style)
 - Share tips on confidence, tone, and follow-up etiquette
4. Action Plan & Wrap-up
 - Assign tasks: resume edits, final draft, mock interview prep
 - Schedule next meeting or touchpoint

Contact Us

If you have any questions or need additional support throughout the mentorship program, please feel free to reach out to us.

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