

**ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
CONSULTANT ENGINEERING MENTOR-PROTÉGÉ PROGRAM
GUIDELINES**

Revised August 2022

The primary purpose of the Mentor-Protégé Program (Program) is to enhance the capabilities of socially and economically disadvantaged businesses to perform engineering and land surveying contracts. The Program centers on business collaborations between Mentor firms and Protégé firms (socially and economically disadvantaged businesses certified as Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE)) to provide developmental assistance to enhance the Protégé's business and technical capabilities to do more complex work.

The following guidelines apply to all participants in the Program:

1. Participation is strictly voluntary.
2. The Mentor-Protégé collaboration on any federally or non-federally funded engineering projects.
3. The Protégé must be a certified DBE engineering firm prequalified with IDOT in at least one category prior to participating in the program.
4. Mentor and Protégé Firm leadership must be involved at on-set of project to discuss identified risks and in a review at end of project.
5. The Mentor-Protégé collaboration is established by a signed, written Development Plan (Plan) outlining the parties' goals and expectations, including monitoring and reporting provisions, the duration of the collaboration, and the services to be provided by the Mentor to the Protégé along with associated hours, and resources to be provided by the Mentor to the Protégé.

The submitted plan is submitted to and approved by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Project Manager. The Plan must meet the following criteria:

- a. Copies of the Plan retained by all parties to it.
- b. Objectives of the parties involved clearly stated.
- c. Measurable benchmarks to be reached by the Protégé at successive stages clearly outlined.
- d. Estimate of direct and indirect costs for services rendered by the Mentor for specific training and assistance to the Protégé for the life of the contract.
- e. Training to be provided by the Mentor to the Protégé. Training areas may include:
 - Marketing
 - Administration/coordination of projects
 - Business planning
 - Recordkeeping
 - Technical assistance
 - Financial counseling
 - Training in new substantive/technical areas for the Protégé

- f. A provision outlining that the plan can be terminated by mutual consent or by IDOT upon determination that:
 - Either party has failed or is unable to meet its obligations under the development Plan;
 - The Protégé is not progressing or is not likely to progress in accordance with the Plan;
 - The Protégé has reached a satisfactory level of self-sufficiency to compete without utilizing the Mentor-Protégé Program;
 - The Plan or provisions contained in it are contrary to the requirements of federal, state or local law or regulation; or,
 - The relationship has continued for the life of the project.
 - g. A provision requiring quarterly and final reports and the due dates of each type of report.
4. The Mentor must have at least five (5) years' experience as a consultant (preferably, but not necessarily as a prime consultant) on IDOT highway engineering contracts with no "less than satisfactory" performance ratings in the categories mentored. The Mentor agrees to devote a minimum of five (5) to ten (10) hours per month working with the Protégé.
 5. The Protégé must perform at least one (1) task in the performance of any contract with the Mentor (In a category the Protégé holds prequalification). The Protégé must be an independent business responsible for the direct day-to-day activities of management, policy making and operations of the business and its contracts. Management, policy making and operational control include: scheduling work operations, overseeing engineering tasks, preparing/submitted payrolls and other required forms, hiring, supervising and firing employees.
 6. The Mentor cannot be responsible for management of the Protégé. Administrative functions must be performed by personnel responsible to or employed by the Protégé at locations under its control.
 7. Any property, equipment, personnel, supplies or other services that are sold, rented, or donated to the Protégé must be detailed in the Plan approved by IDOT and should further be covered by bills of sale, lease agreements, etc. Any financial investment and security arrangements by the Mentor in the Protégé are subject to approval under the Plan, and must not permit the Mentor to assume control of the Protégé.
 8. A non-DBE Mentor cannot be awarded DBE credit in excess of one half of the DBE contract goal on any single IDOT project for have a Protégé.
 9. The Mentor and the Protégé may submit a Statement of Interest as a "Team" on projects subject to normal "Teaming" approval requirements.
 10. Any collaboration in which a Mentor requires a Protégé to have an exclusive agreement violates federal antitrust laws with respect to limiting competition. During the course of the collaboration, the Protégé must have the latitude to contract with others.
 11. The Mentor will:
 - a. Sign a Development Plan with the Protégé;
 - b. Attend regularly scheduled meetings with Protégé;
 - c. Include the Protégé during each phase of the project;

- d. Identify and acknowledge improvements in specific areas, such as technical expertise, under specific prequalification categories as outlined in the plan;
- e. Help identify needs that can be met through one-on-one supportive services consultant assistance;
- f. Offer advice on the best ways to achieve success;
- g. Identify critical steps toward meeting goals;
- h. Respond promptly to the Protégé's request for assistance on significant business problems, not routine, issues;
- i. Provide training in new skills to increase the Protégé's competitiveness;
- j. Monitor the progress of the Plan; and
- k. Report to IDOT regarding progress of the collaboration/Plan, achievements, etc., in the manner required by the Plan.

12. The Protégé will:

- a. Sign the Development Plan with the Mentor;
- b. Attend regularly scheduled meetings with the Mentor and execute specific progress steps;
- c. Implement goals and objectives developed with the Mentor and accept reasonable suggestions to improve its business;
- d. Monitor the progress of the Plan; and
- e. Report to IDOT regarding progress of the collaboration/Plan, achievements, etc. in the manner required by the Plan.

13. IDOT will:

- a. Conduct an evaluation and assessment of potential Mentors and DBEs for participation in the Program;
- b. Provide on-going monitoring and inspection of approved Plans; and
- c. Inform Selection Committee which firms are serving as Mentors

14. DBE Goals and Mentor Administrative Costs:

- a. The Mentor's DBE goal for participants in the Program will be five (5) percent less than the overall stated goal for any project on which the Mentor uses the Protégé as a DBE Subconsultant. The goal reduction for participants in the Program will be contingent upon the following:
 - i. A Mentor firm selected for a project may submit a request to the Department to use a Protégé
 - ii. The DBE Protégé must be subcontracted to, and actually perform a minimum of two (2) percent of the total contract in order for the Mentor to be eligible for the goal reduction. The goal reduction will be implemented only on approved projects in order to assess the effects of the Program.

- b. The Plan may include a fee schedule to cover the direct and indirect costs incurred by the Mentor to provide training and administrative or developmental assistance to the Protégé. The fee schedule is subject to IDOT approval and fees are eligible for reimbursement as part of the prime contract.
- 15. The Mentor-Protégé Program is not intended to diminish or circumvent existing DBE rules or regulations, but rather is intended to increase legitimate DBE activities. Abuse of this Program may be used as the basis for action against both the Mentor and Protégé including, but not limited to, suspension or debarment.
- 16. Except as indicated otherwise herein, all federal regulations, local, state and federal statutes, in addition to IDOT policies, must be adhered to in the conduct of any Mentor-Protégé collaboration or activities.