

2016-2017 Executive Women in Government Mentoring Program Mid-Point Evaluation

Executive Summary

The Executive Women in Government Mentoring Program has been carefully designed to help women who aspire to executive positions in the federal government. It enables the Executive Women in Government (EWG) organization to prepare, promote, support and mentor women for senior leadership positions and answer their call to service.

The purpose of this evaluation is to determine the degree to which the program successfully achieved its stated goals at the onset. To make this assessment, **The Training Connection, Inc. (TTC)** administered a written survey at the program's mid-point, to which 28 of the participants (14 protégés and 14 mentors) responded.

This report summarizes **The Training Connection's** findings and observations from the written evaluation process and provides recommendations for strengthening future programs and partnerships. A full list of participant responses may be found in Appendix A of this Executive Summary.

While it is easy to focus solely on the protégés' experiences, we have found it useful to ask the mentors to comment on what they have observed as well. Respondents (protégé and mentors) were asked to rate the overall impact of the program along with the program effectiveness in key areas:

Table 1. Overall, how effective is the mentoring program at helping facilitate professional growth and development?

	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable
Protégés (14)	93%	7%	0%
Mentors (13)	92%	8%	0%

Table 2. Expand networks to include employees at different organizational levels throughout the EWG community.

	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable
Protégés (14)	86%	7%	7%
Mentors (14)	93%	7%	0%

Table 3. Gain an understanding of how to navigate the federal government.

	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable
Protégés (14)	86%	14%	0%
Mentors (14)	100%	0%	0%

Table 4. Gain new tips and techniques to do the job better and feel more productive.

	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable
Protégés (14)	86%	14%	0%
Mentors (14)	93%	7%	0%

Table 5. Identify the knowledge and skills needed for success at the leadership level.

	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable
Protégés (14)	93%	7%	0%
Mentors (14)	93%	7%	0%

TIME INVESTMENT

The old adage of “you get out of life what you put into it,” provides a fine parallel for the effectiveness of mentoring partnerships—their success directly correlates to the amount of time invested in them. The investment of time from the protégé can be quite significant because of the additional time dedicated to the EWG developmental activities (field trips, developmental assignments, action learning teams, etc.).

Table 6. How much time was invested each month in mentoring (including meetings with your mentor and working on learning activities in your Mentoring Action Plan)?

	Less than one hour per month	One to two hours per month	More than two hours per month
Protégés (14)	14%	57%	29%

Table 7. On average, how much time do you invest connecting with your protégé each month?

	Less than one hour per month	One to two hours per month	More than two hours per month
Mentors (14)	7%	71%	21%

Table 8. How well does this amount of time meet your needs?

	Just Right	Not Enough	Too Much
Protégés (14)	86%	14%	0%
Mentors (14)	64%	36%	0%

A sampling of the comments about what precluded them from investing more time are as follows:

Protégés' Views:

- ◆ We are meeting every two weeks but have not yet resumed since the Holidays (Dec 2016). Hope to start up again soon.
- ◆ My mentor has been fairly busy.
- ◆ My mentor is flexible in meeting me and responding to my emails.

Mentors' Views:

- ◆ One of the challenges for me was the protégé from a different agency. I felt my ability to truly support her development was hindered because I did not have influence or a better understanding of the culture of her agency. It may make sense to take another look at the program in light of the current hiring situation within the federal government and focus more on external education and gaining skill to "be prepared" for position when they do open up. Or look for ways to build more skills while in their current position.
- ◆ I will take the opportunity to inquire with my protégé. I think high workload has been a factor for her, and need for health appointments has been a factor for me.
- ◆ This protégé has not been able to devote much time to the program. She wanted to take initiative to advance her career but has determined that she does not have time for the program. She indicated that she is a bit overwhelmed with all she has on her plate right now to consider changing jobs or to put in the effort for the program. We have talked about balancing career and family and I have provided appropriate advice, but after multiple discussions on proposed content she hasn't even been able to complete the mentoring action plan at this point.
- ◆ Protégé has had a number of family situations that have affected her ability to devote time to interaction with her mentor.
- ◆ I need to make more time in my schedule. In the last cohort, I met with my protégé often. Haven't had a chance to do that this time but will take responsibility to correct the problem.

We also asked protégés to define the types of learning activities they have participated in up to the mid-point.

Table 9. What types of activities have you participated in so far during the mentoring program? (Please check all that apply)

	Conversations with Mentor	Developmental Assignments	Networking Opportunities	Stretch Assignments	Formal Classroom Training
Protégés (13)	100%	54%	77%	15%	23%

Situational mentoring is a valuable component in the EWG Mentoring Program. Participants are encouraged to include at least one situational mentoring experience in their activities. To that end, we asked mentors if they have recommended their protégés to a situational mentor, and we asked protégés if they have met with a situational mentor.

Table 10. Did you recommend that your protégé meet with a situational mentor yet?

	Yes	No
Mentors (14)	64%	36%

Table 11. Have you contacted a situational mentor yet?

	Yes	No
Protégés (14)	21%	79%

MATCHING PROCESS

Without question, a very important aspect of the mentoring component is being paired with a suitable partner. Many factors go into the matching process, but only feedback from mentors and protégés can truly reflect how well the matching process is working.

Table 12. How suitable is your mentoring match?

	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable
Protégés (14)	100%	0%	0%
Mentors (14)	79%	14%	7%
Total (28)	89%	7%	4%

The matching process has been very successful as 89% of participants are satisfied with their matches. The protégés have credited their mentors with giving them a broader view of the organization, networking opportunities, and many new career development strategies. The following sampling of comments represent the sentiment of the respondents:

Protégés' Views:

- ◆ My mentor and I have an agreed upon meeting schedule and plan to achieve my mentoring goals. She provided support by taking actionable steps to connect me to the executives, events and activities to support my goals.
- ◆ She is very knowledgeable and provides good feedback when asked for advice.
- ◆ My mentor is an excellent match in both DISC attributes (not too similar/not too different) as well as in communication style. My mentor is very open, willing to share and is deeply committed to growing her people as well as her protégé. My mentor does not just slip in/out of coaching mode and has her way of relating, as I experienced my time with her.
- ◆ I feel that her experience coupled with her approachability makes this an effective matching. I wish we met more (but that's also on me).
- ◆ My mentor and I have the same temperament, and she has been a wonderful sounding board and guide when creating my career strategy. She pushes me and encourages me to take risks. She's the best match for me.
- ◆ My mentor and I are like-minded both personally and professionally, which makes our dialogues natural and effective.

- ◆ I had a bit of a tough time finding a mentor- it seemed if you didn't make a connection right away, those that were "suggested" for you by the system were already matched with another protégé. Also, some mentors did not provide much information to make an adequate assessment. So, I would encourage mentors to please provide enough information. Also, I think it is important that mentors have significant connections in the federal government. Not sure that was always the case from the different discussions I had in establishing a match. What many of us need are sponsors - those that can open the door for us, not just mentoring. That is a tough situation to establish in this kind of program.
- ◆ I have a fantastic mentor! I'm very lucky to have been paired with her. We have a similar background and work ethic which immediately put me at ease. She is very open and candid, and we have had some terrific discussions thus far. She even invited me to meet with her mentor who, as it turns out, I used to work for several years ago! It was a wonderful meeting, and I'm very appreciative of my mentor having reached out to do that, and to trust me enough to meet her own mentor. :)
- ◆ Oral communication and leading people are the two professional growth opportunities I'm pursuing. My mentor has expertise and is providing guidance, networking opportunities, and information about training in these areas.

Mentors' Views:

- ◆ The protégé is relatively shy. I take on the role of propelling her to explore more options.
- ◆ My protégé and I have similar interests and we have learned much from each other. She is at an appropriate level in her professional development for me to be able to help.
- ◆ I think it's working well, however I believe I would be able to better support her if I had more insight to her specific agency.
- ◆ I am not sure that my protégé is getting all she is looking for from me. Perhaps as a GS 15 mentor and she as a GS 15 protégé, I would like her to have the benefit of an SES protégé, and she selected me, so perhaps I could give that a break!
- ◆ She is driven, she wants to be a Senior Executive and she is aggressive about seeking opportunities. The federal hiring freeze has definitely taken its toll regarding her endeavors to apply for SES.
- ◆ She does not have time for this program.
- ◆ It is a great match in terms of personality and management style.
- ◆ My protégé is very interested in changing her position type and agency. This is more challenging than ever due to the hiring freeze and overall slowdown arising from the change of Administration.
- ◆ We have a lot in common. We know many of the same people and we both have experience working at HUD. Our personalities align very well. Just need to spend more time.
- ◆ She is a hard charger and is eager to learn. She is energetic and has well defined goals and objectives. These characteristics allow us to work through her action plan and stay focused. It has been a pleasure to get to know her and I am honored to be her mentor.
- ◆ The round robin, flash mentoring start to the program allowed protégés to identify mentors with whom they related. In both programs, I accepted the first protégé who contacted me. I feel that getting exposure to a wide range of potential mentors in the beginning stages gives protégés an opportunity to evaluate, whether consciously or subconsciously, whether they will have a good relationship with the mentor.

- ◆ Different "technical" backgrounds however, good match in terms of diversity of experiences to address the challenges that she faces and her development goals. Very comfortable and open relationship. No hesitation to reach out any time she needs me and I make myself available.

SUPERVISORY AND PROGRAM SUPPORT

The EWG mentoring design encourages the supervisor to support the mentoring process by allocating the necessary time for mentoring meetings and training events. When asked the protégés how supportive their supervisor has been, they responded as follows:

Table 13. How supportive has your supervisor been in the mentoring process?

	Very Supportive	Supportive	Not Sure/ Undecided	Not Enough Support	Unsupportive
Protégés (14)	57%	29%	0%	0%	14%

Each mentoring pair was asked to design and develop a Mentoring Action Plan (MAP). The MAP is based on an assessment of each protégé's own developmental needs. The protégés were encouraged to solicit support and guidance from their mentor.

Table 14. How supportive was your mentor when preparing your Mentoring Action Plan?

	Very Supportive	Supportive	Not Sure/ Undecided	Not Enough Support	Unsupportive
Protégés (14)	93%	0%	7%	0%	0%

Table 15. How supportive has the Program Coordinator (Jane Sanville) been in the mentoring process?

	Very Supportive	Somewhat Supportive	Not Sure/ Undecided	Not Enough Support	Unsupportive
Protégés (14)	93%	0%	7%	0%	0%
Mentors (14)	93%	0%	7%	0%	0%

OVERALL STRENGTHS OF THE PROGRAM

Protégés and mentors alike agreed that the mentoring component has helped the employee develop. The following comments represent the sentiment of the respondents.

Protégés' Views:

- ◆ Formal commitment, having an experienced female SES as a mentor and group activities and training.

- ◆ Organized. Structured. Uses technology to match.
- ◆ The EWG Mentoring Program provides exposure to a network of impressive professionals. This exposure, this access to a learning opportunity, makes all the difference in all protégé's professional development. It is hard to embody what is not modelled for you - hard to achieve what is not visible. The EWG Mentoring Program provides that modeling and vision-building.
- ◆ Wide network of experienced and willing mentors.
- ◆ The pool of mentors is very impressive. I'm so appreciative of this group of accomplished women in federal service donating their time to a junior cohort of protégés.
- ◆ It is a great concept.
- ◆ The program opens the door to career resources that otherwise would not be available or accessible.
- ◆ Structured, fun and great mentors.
- ◆ Facilitating a successful match and keeping the mentoring momentum going despite competing demands.
- ◆ The network and connection of the leadership and fellow cohort members.
- ◆ The framework for the EWG Mentoring Program is the largest strength. The DISC profile allows the mentor/protégé to understand each other, but also provides the mentor insight into the protégé's adaptive and natural styles to tailor conversations and guidance. The speed mentoring session is a great opportunity for informal introductions to help in the selection of matches.
- ◆ Speakers are mentors familiar with federal government and EWG.

Mentors' Views:

- ◆ Provides a semi-formal structure to make us engage and progress.
- ◆ Well defined mentoring framework that provides guidance and assistance, while being flexible enough to allow us to best fit the activities to our schedules and needs.
- ◆ Flexibility in crafting agreements and in working out the details.
- ◆ Providing protégés access to SES to learn from.
- ◆ Connections! Commitment by speakers/leaders/panelists/Training Connection!
- ◆ Foundational support (without being too prescriptive) through the core team and a great set of mentors and protégés.
- ◆ The people in the program during this cohort seem to be more focused on gaining the expertise to move up into the SES ranks.
- ◆ Support, encouragement, networking, positive energy, constructive critique and group of like-minded professionals.
- ◆ Connections, support, and shared experiences/lessons learned.
- ◆ Balance of group/organized activities with one-on-one interaction.
- ◆ Providing opportunities to guide young women with outstanding credentials and capabilities to reach their goals.
- ◆ I think the EWG's mentoring program is extremely well-organized. The structure of the kickoff session and the resource materials, e.g., the MAP and the follow-up reminders to beef up the MAP, are extremely worthwhile. But, I also have found that just being available to provide advice when the mentee faces a difficult situation with a supervisor or colleague is something that my mentees find useful. While the long-term goal may be to help mentees prepare for leadership situations, oftentimes they are trying to cope with the day-to-day challenges of dealing with difficult colleagues or supervisors. While the immediate crisis cannot be ignored, I find that sometimes that becomes the focus instead of the long-term goal of preparing for leadership positions.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

We also asked participants to suggest ways in which they felt the EWG Mentoring Program could be improved to make it even better. The participants provided the following responses.

Protégés' Views:

- ◆ Use technology to broadcast and/or record meetings if possible so that more people can participate if they are traveling or can't get to the meeting place in person due to heavy schedules. More sharing of knowledge in a group setting, maybe submit Q&A to female SESes. ECQ tips; writing the ECQ resume or CV (this seems somewhat new) and reading list. Not sure if this is planned or not but some kind of recognition about being selected/accepted to the program meaning the protégé has been identified as top candidate for SES or other senior leadership positions in the Federal space.
- ◆ I would like to have another protégé social, and one with protégés and mentors.
- ◆ None.
- ◆ More to facilitate sharing across protégé cohorts - we can learn a lot from each other, too.
- ◆ Periodically co-mingle current cohort with previous members.
- ◆ I would like to see the EWG association actively support in the development of protégé's leadership skills with EWG meetings, committees, events, seminars, etc. This would also increase EWG membership. Provide editable tools and templates (reducing the need to recreate on our own). For example, I requested an editable version of the MAP. The training coordinator responded that one was not available and suggested I create one via manual copy/paste. I'm sure this would be a resource to all protégé's. Monthly webinars focused on leadership development skills (ECQ's, leadership book review, etc.). The EWG Mentoring Program Coordinators should drive ongoing protégé cohort engagement as a consistent POC.
- ◆ I would like to see more formal programs offered that are appropriate for both the mentors and the protégés.
- ◆ Not sure, let me think about that. (x2)
- ◆ There have been scheduling challenges in Jan/Feb. Due to metro safe track work, Arlington National Cemetery will be closed in Feb. It would be helpful to mention those kinds of transportation challenges in the emails requesting members to RSVP so we can plan accordingly and to hopefully ensure that no one gets stranded. For next year, we should all spread the word about this wonderful program to our colleagues and friends across the government. We have several departments and agencies that have multiple EWG participants, so adding members from unrepresented agencies will benefit all of us by adding a breadth of representation, experience, and expertise.

Mentors' Views:

- ◆ Our team needs to promptly accomplish the intermediate steps to get to our goals.
- ◆ Perhaps just a few more general email reminders out to the group -- how's it going? Have you talked recently? Do you need help setting up any activities? I know you do a good job reaching out after things like this survey, but we all need a gentle reminder occasionally - and an email staring me in the face is the best way for me to remember to get something done.

- ◆ Would be great to hear others' stories.
- ◆ I need to find a way to integrate more of the resources into my week.
- ◆ The programs planned for the remainder of the program will be useful for mentees and give them additional opportunities to hear from other senior executives and network with their peers. Unfortunately, due to a prior commitment, I was unable to attend the Feb. 13 session. Having a few more of these programs would be helpful, especially if scheduled far enough in advance due to everyone's work and travel schedules. I do appreciate the follow-up messages and reminders and would appreciate more tips on how to keep mentees focused on their long-term leadership goals.
- ◆ Just to stay on the same track. It is a great program.
- ◆ I think forums with multiple mentors and protégés would be valuable to expand networks and garner lessons learned.
- ◆ Remain positive, focused and moving forward.
- ◆ Reschedule the SES Panel if at all possible.
- ◆ No specific recommendations.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall picture painted by the participants' ratings and comments is overwhelmingly positive. The Program Coordinator may want to consider making a few changes in the areas that received the greatest participant feedback:

- 👉 Consider additional opportunities to bring participants together to socialize and share experiences.
- 👉 Create and develop skill based webinars and recruit an expert to host/tape.
- 👉 Widen reach of membership (and potential mentors) to unrepresented agencies.
- 👉 Mention transportation challenges when sending out reminders for events.

A full list of the comments (from the mentors and protégés) regarding participant effectiveness can be found in the reports section of The Mentoring Connection.