

Draft Guidelines on Mentorship Scheme

Preamble

1. Mentoring can be one of the most valuable and effective development opportunities an organization can offer to new employees. Having the guidance, encouragement, and support of a trusted and experienced mentor can provide a mentee with a broad range of personal and professional benefits, which ultimately lead to improved performance in the workplace.

2. Mentorship is not entirely a new concept and has existed in public service in an informal manner for decades. The guidance and positive orientation provided by a senior to his junior or the strong guardian like bond that is often seen between probationary officers with their training Collector or SP, or DFO are a few examples in All India Service (“AIS”). Over the years such informal mentorship tradition, it appears, has been on decline.

3. In the present scenario, there is an even greater need for mentorship in public services. The work environment for public servants is becoming increasingly challenging and expectations to perform from both the organization and public from public servants are ever increasing. Formal training processes do extensively equip public servants to professionally perform in their roles; however, in order to achieve true excellence in public service, over years in a sustained manner, mentorship can play a crucial role.

4. A mentor can pivot as a ‘Friend, Philosopher and Guide’ and steer an officer into the correct service attitude, impart key professional skillsets, give guidance on expected norms of personal conduct in public life, through experience sharing, enable better emotional response to challenges in service and support an officer to achieve their potential in contributing as a public servant. Mentorship may also be more important for organisations themselves, as linking up a mature mentor with a promising recipient is an excellent way to keep values up. Mentorship can also be an effective preventive vigilance tool to orient the new inductees towards professional ethics and integrity.

5. In this backdrop, the Central Vigilance Commission formed a 5 member-committee to examine the issue and come up with a formal mentorship structure. The committee has suggested following as part of the new proposed mentorship scheme:

- a) **Need for mentorship scheme:** There is a need to have a well constituted mentorship scheme for new entrants within Central Government. The benefits are likely to be in terms of vastly improved professional performance and public service outcomes.

- b) **Scope of the scheme:** The mentorship scheme may be at this stage only limited to newly inducted officers of All India Service (“AIS”), Group A officers in Central Government. In phases, the scheme may be extended to all those already in service.
- c) **Composition:** The mentors and mentees may be from the same service initially. This will make the mentors more relatable to the mentees and enable more precise guidance. However, with time, mentors may be chosen from other service– this may be applicable in case of AIS officers who spend certain number of years in state and then go to Centre for various work assignments. In such cases, such employee may have an option to have more than one mentor – one at the level and other at the Centre. Similarly from Group – ‘A’ services, many officers come on deputation to Govt. of India(GoI). They too could have a second mentor from other services (including All India Services) to enable them to have a broader outlook of the functioning of the Government.
- d) **Period of mentorship scheme:** The mentorship scheme must necessarily be for the first eight years after joining public service and, if possible, may be for throughout the career of an employee. The first few years are the formative years when young employees have difficulties traversing the new environment and need all the support and guidance for successfully transition into their new roles and to transform or mould them to embody the highest values of the organization they serve so that they become assets to the organization.
- e) **Panel of Mentors:** The cadre controlling authority may prepare a panel of mentors initially. The selection has to be carefully made from all the senior batches. Only such officers who have the capability to be mentors may be selected. They should be role models for professional excellence, integrity, impeccable conduct and should exhibit aspirational leadership qualities in their professional roles. The selection can be made by a suitable Committee that verifies service records of the mentor, their professional achievements, 360 degree feedback on their conduct, integrity and public reputation. An orientation course for a day may be conducted via virtual platform for the mentors on the design and expectations from the mentoring scheme and their role as mentors in contributing towards strengthening future of their organization. Such selected mentors may also be given gender sensitization exposure with respect to their specific role as mentors.

- f) **Mentor- Mentee Scheme:** After a series of initial interactions between a pool of mentees and a pool of mentors; options may be taken from both mentors and mentees on their selection of mentees and mentors respectively. The mentee must give a choice of mentor within two years of entering government employment. One mentor can have more than one mentee. Keeping in view the choices exercised and also with a view to balance any parochial choices and workload of mentors, the cadre controlling authority may allocate mentees to suitable mentors with mutual consent of mentor and mentee.
- g) **Mentoring Process:** Although there will be flexibility for experienced mentors to adopt suitable mode of mentoring, certain indicative guidelines may be given:
- i) Mentor should initially get to know the mentee well and be accessible informally for interaction with them. The mentee should feel comfortable in approaching them for consultation.
 - ii) While mentor will be in a position to give extensive guidance, he/she should also be a good listener and understand how the mentee is doing professionally, if there are any workplace difficulties and also if mentee is going through some personal difficulties which may impact his professional performance. Being a good listener and observing behaviour of mentee will allow mentor to better guide the mentee.
 - iii) Mentor should be in regular touch with the mentee either telephonically, via virtual platform or in-person meetings over a cup of tea. The frequency of interaction may be once a month.
 - iv) Mentor may socialize with the mentee by hosting a family lunch or dinner once or twice in the year. A limited hospitality expense of the mentor may be reimbursed.
 - v) Mentor may apart from oral guidance and feedback also write personalized letters/e-mails on one or two occasions during the year to his mentee. The letters may have a friendly and positive tone and highlight some issues needing correction without sounding offensive and encourage the mentee to perform better professionally.
 - vi) Mentor may also take a feedback from the immediate supervisory officer of the mentee on how the mentee is performing, whether he/she has the right professional attitude towards work, areas needing more focus and any identified shortcomings.
 - vii) Mentor should make an effort to share his professional experiences and learnings during interactions with mentee; try to transfer his professional knowledge and skill sets; impart positive attitude towards public service; emphasise on importance of integrity and

financial propriety and manner of proper conduct by a public servant in society.

- viii) Mentor is not expected to intervene in professional matters on behalf of the mentee and also not make recommendations on transfers or postings of the mentee. A mentor is to have an informal relationship as a 'friend, philosopher and guide'.
- ix) Mentors are not to be forceful in their approach. They must be respectful and not tend to curb the enthusiasm, innovation and sincere initiatives of mentees. It may be borne in mind that despite their best efforts not all mentees would be receptive enough to moulding.
- x) Mentors may also use the opportunity to understand points of view, new approaches and innovations that mentees may have. Youngsters may often be more innovative and have a new way of looking at things. This may give a new perspective to mentors also.

h) Feedback, Change of mentor- mentee allocation and Exit: The evaluation and feedback should normally be informal say for example during service week, over phone calls etc. The history sheet of mentors-mentees may be recorded, for any future reference. The mentor-mentee association between any two employees, if not specifically changed, by would be assumed to continue by default. Mentors as well as mentees have the liberty to exit the scheme and inform the cadre controlling authority/ /Management.

9. The above mentioned proposed scheme is broad skeletal framework and the organizations and departments are free to fine-tune the modalities for effective implementation of the scheme so that the spirit behind the scheme is followed. Although the proposed structure is meant to formalize the mentorship scheme in public sector, the same should be done with minimum paper-work, official correspondences etc so as to not burden the Cadre Controlling Authorities with additional work.
