

## White Paper on 360° Mentoring for SC FPDs

### Issue:

To obtain level 3 PMCDP certification, mentoring is a required developmental activity. Since mentoring is required, it is beneficial to the Mentee, Mentor, and the Office of Science to make this experience as helpful and valuable as possible. It has also been widely discussed that mentoring although not required is also beneficial for FPDs at lower levels. At this point in time, there are limited resources and tools available to Federal Project Directors for mentoring.

### Background:

Recently a new mentoring forum for SC Federal Project Directors suggested 360° mentoring as a possible idea for FPD mentoring. To provide some information about 360° mentoring, I've attached an article written in a Harvard Business School Newsletter. In short, 360° mentoring involves having a network of mentors that provide continual communication and feedback. With the mentors you choose, there should also be an agreed upon plan of how the mentorship will work, and the mentor should be able to benefit from the experience as well.

### Analysis:

As most FPDs know, being a successful Federal Project Director entails working well with everyone we interact with (i.e., contractors, DOE headquarters, and staff within individual DOE site offices), so having a good variety of mentors appears to be important for effective professional development and meaningful feedback.

Although having multiple mentors is beneficial, continually monitoring and staying in contact with multiple mentors is very time consuming. Instead, the FPD mentoring process can possibly use a tailored approach by obtaining feedback from professional contacts (let's call them 360° mentors) that know the mentee well. A mentoring form can be given to prospective 360° mentors to provide feedback on the mentee's key FPD attributes (i.e. leadership, communication, etc...) and provide feedback on areas the mentee can further develop. The idea is to get candid feedback in order to tailor the mentoring plan to fit the mentee's needs. Once all the 360° feedback is obtained, the mentee/mentor can collaboratively develop a mutually beneficial mentoring plan.

At the end of the mentoring process, the mentor can then give the mentee feedback on where he/she improved during the mentorship and on how to continue progressing after the mentorship is over. Also at the end of the mentorship, the mentee can update all the 360° mentors on how the mentorship went. This tailored 360° approach with one central SC FPD mentor would be consistent with the PMCDP level 3 mentoring requirement, and would give the mentee/mentor a tool to help create the initial mentoring agreement, which is a PMCDP level 3 requirement (competency 3.12.2).

**Guidelines for use:**

The goal of creating this mentoring resource is to provide the mentor/mentee with a tool to make the most of their mentorship. At the beginning of the mentorship, hopefully the mentee/mentor can gain an understanding of where the mentee can improve his/her FPD skills.

There was discussion on who should send the feedback forms and how the FPD's supervisor should be involved in this process. One suggestion was to have the FPD's supervisor help determine who the potential 360° mentors are and send out the feedback forms directly. At initial thought this might be a good idea, but we have to be careful this 360° feedback tool is not being used to serve as a basis for employee performance evaluations. Such a connotation might skew the way this resource is used and minimize the opportunity to obtain the best and most useful 360° feedback that can help the FPD. After further discussion, the mentor and mentee should work together to select 360° mentors that will provide the best representation in areas to improve from a good variety of people, and the mentee should send out the feedback forms directly. The number of 360° mentors will also have to be a manageable amount, and the ideal number of 360° mentors is thought to be between four and seven. The pool of potential 360° mentors can possibly include contractor project managers, DOE headquarters personnel (OPA, APM, and Program Offices), FPDs, and DOE Site Office staff/leadership.

The following steps are thought to be the most productive way to obtain optimal results from this 360° mentoring resource.

Step 1: Obtain a list of all the previous and current projects the mentee has been a part of.

Step 2: Collaboratively (mentor/mentee) brainstorm and determine the list of potential 360° mentors that will provide good constructive feedback.

Step 3: Once a list is determined, have the mentee contact the potential 360° mentors to see if they are willing to help provide constructive feedback on the mentee.

Step 4: Have the mentee send out and receive the feedback form.

Step 5: Use the 360° feedback to help formulate a mentoring agreement and plan.

Step 6: During or at the end of the DOE SC mentoring period, the mentee should reengage the 360° mentors to discuss their progress, and reassess the original 360° feedback form. This is also a good time to network and keep in contact with colleagues.

**Conclusion:**

It appears that a tailored approach for using 360° mentoring may be a useful tool in the FPD mentoring program. Having this tool would give mentors and mentees a resource to achieve a successful mentorship and obtain beneficial professional development. Additionally, by engaging colleagues in the 360° mentoring process, the mentee stands to enhance working relationships by demonstrating the drive to improve. It is also suggested that having a mentorship for more junior FPDs, not only for level 2 FPDs seeking to achieve level 3 certification, is beneficial to foster the FPD's network development and overall career goals. Also to be clear, this resource will not serve as a performance evaluation tool, but will only be used to further the FPD's professional development and formulate a mentoring plan/agreement. The 360° feedback obtained is to be kept confidential between the mentor and the mentee.

After positive feedback from the FPD community on this topic, a 360° mentoring feedback form has been developed for Office of Science FPD mentoring use and will be available to any FPD mentor as a resource to help the development of FPDs in the Office of Science.