



# National Veteran Small Business Coalition (NVSBC) ADVISOR GUIDE

## *GUIDELINES for MEMBERS*

### INTRODUCTION

#### PURPOSE

**The NVSBC Advisor Guidelines for sharing experiences is designed to:**

- *Provide guidance for members and activities of the NVSBC, and other interested parties*
- *Set forth basic guidelines for all persons to understand their roles and responsibilities in being Advisors or Advisees (Seekers)*

#### APPLICABILITY

This Guide applies to the National organization, all chapters and interest groups of the NVSBC and all other persons who volunteer to be participants in the Advisors Program.

### CONCEPT

#### OVERVIEW

The concept of a training system under which a senior or more experienced person acts as counsel or guide (Advisor) to a less experienced person seeking advice (Seeker) has been employed for centuries as a way of capitalizing on the wisdom and insights of successful role models or experienced individuals, who are committed to supporting the development and success of less experienced members of the group, organization or profession. Over time, it has grown into both an informal practice between individuals and into a tool that organizations can use to nurture and grow their members and employees.

For the NVSBC, although the concept of “paying it forward” is a collateral mission for the NVSBC, it is a core value. It is the principal means by which the organization and its members share, encourage and inculcate the professional values and attributes associated with being a successful veteran business owner and contributor to society.

Given the focus on developing desired and necessary values, attributes and skills, it is critical that both those providing advice and/or counsel and those receiving and benefiting from it fully understand the precepts and purpose before attempting the actual practice. A precise and functional definition Advisor and the role of the participants in the process are essential.

**Advising** is a special interpersonal relationship between an experienced and less experienced entrepreneur fostering developmental, empowerment, and nurturing relationship over time.

**Advisorship** includes the acquisition of attitudes and capabilities as well as the acquisition of skills and behaviors. The end result is knowledge, insight and self-reliance in those being Advised as they seek to achieve professional development and high performance. It is a relationship in which an experienced practitioner facilitates a learning process, rather than one in which a “guru” or “mover and shaker” simply dispenses advice or opens doors on behalf of a favored individual.

## OBJECTIVES

**The Guidelines of the NVSBC Advisor Program is designed to help participants:**

- *Establish and cultivate a personal, positive and productive trusted relationship*
- *Define personal and professional goals and craft a plan to meet those goals*

## METHODS

The purpose of the program is to capitalize on the experiences and wisdom of successful role models and other individuals (known as Advisors) who will volunteer their time in this endeavor. They will share their knowledge and expertise with less experienced individuals (known as Seeker) in a structured Counseling relationship via mutual consent.

The purpose of the one-one-one relationship is match an Advisor with a Seeker to pursue advice, explore different approaches, perspectives, learn from vast experiences through a myriad of communication methods as determined between these individuals.

The Advisor and Seeker will meet together to develop goals and objectives in accordance with guidelines outlined in this Guide. The one-on-one relationship requires interpersonal interaction on a regular scheduled basis, structured development plans and desired outcomes.

## CHARACTERISTICS

- *The Advisor Program is a voluntary program set up between two companies, one (the Advisor) experienced in Federal Contracting and the other, (the Seeker) a nascent firm with a desire to learn the successful methodologies employed by the Advisor and to put the precepts learned into practical use. This relationship may take on a Prime Contractor-Subcontractor role and relationship with defined responsibilities for each party beginning with the legal instrument known as a Teaming Agreement.*
- *The educating connection between the Advisor and Seeker is kept strictly on a professional level.*

- *The professional participation in the Advisor Program must not adversely affect normal job performance.*

## **BENEFITS**

- *This program offers a Safe harbor to test drive options before they are forced to be more definitive and assertive*
- *When a new business has not built a trusted relationship with others yet, they can find ongoing, meaningful guidance from their assigned advisor.*
- *Advisors can offer focused input (e.g., marketing, product direction, customer service, back office support, financial)*
- *Advisors provide an independent source of information and advice to the owner on strategic issues or risks confronting the business*
- *The Advisor Program creates a 'learning forum'*
- *Advisors provide seekers with insights and ideas which can only come with distance from the day-to-day operations*
- *Advisors encourages and supports the exploration of new business ideas*
- *Advisors act as a resource for new business owners*
- *The Advisor Program encourages the development of a governance framework that enables continued growth, while not stifling the spirit or vision of the founder*
- *Advisors can monitor business performance and challenge the seeker to consider options for improving the business*

## **ADVISOR**

### **ROLES**

An Advisor is someone who has achieved personal, professional and career success, offers the wisdom of his/her experiences, provides guidance, encouragement and feedback and helps the Seeker develop skills to achieve his/her full potential. An Advisor acts as a role model to guide and counsel individuals who are searching to improve themselves, and who are interested in a particular field of expertise, while focusing on the strengths and potentials of Advisors rather their limitations.

An Advisor must possess excellent knowledge of the federal acquisition methods and systems, skills in performance evaluation and counseling and have the ability to provide resources, e.g. networking opportunities, online information, job fairs, updated newsletters, conferences and resume referrals, to the Seeker. An Advisor should be a role model, counselor, confidant and advisor to the Seeker. He or she is experienced, committed and dedicated to creating and developing leaders.

**In order to be successful, the Advisor must have skills or develop new ones in each of the following roles:**

- **Coach.** *The primary purposes of the Advisor as a coach are to guide and motivate.*
- **Counselor.** *The primary purposes of the Advisor as a counselor are to identify problems and assist in finding solutions.*

- **Teacher.** *Advisors often serve as teachers for their Seekers to assist in skill and business competency development, corporate resume building; including Capability Statements, Past Performance, Staff Training opportunities.*
- **Relationship-builder.** *Advisors help facilitate the development and management of personal and professional relationships.*

**In fulfilling these roles, the qualities which are essential in being an effective Advisor include:**

- **A desire to help.** *Individuals who are interested in and willing to help others.*
- **Have had positive experiences.** *Individuals who have had positive formal or informal experiences with an Advisor tend to be good Advisors themselves.*
- **Good reputation for developing others.** *Experienced people who have a good reputation for helping others develop their skills.*
- **Time and energy.** *People who have the time and mental energy to devote to the relationship.*
- **Up-to-date knowledge.** *Individuals who have maintained current, up-to-date business and technological knowledge and/or skills.*
- **Learning attitude.** *Individuals who are still willing and able to learn and who see the potential benefits of an Advising relationship.*
- **Demonstrated effective managerial (Advising) skills.** *Individuals who have demonstrated effective coaching, counseling, facilitating and networking skills.*

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

- *Establish mutually agreeable times and places to discuss and participate in the development of expectations between the parties.*
- *Provide guidance, support and encouragement to help the Seeker become more efficient and productive in achieving federal business plans and goals.*
- *Maintain an effective Advisor-Seeker relationship on concerns related to business development and planning.*
- *Suggest appropriate training and developmental opportunities to the Seeker to provide further preparation for assuming increased pursuit of larger and more demanding contracting opportunities.*

## **BENEFITS**

- *Develops greater insights into the Seeker's line of work and organization.*
- *Uses the Advisor as a sounding board for ideas and formulation of options.*
- *Obtains feedback on cross-generational, cross-gender and cross-functional issues.*
- *Enhances counseling, guidance and motivational skills.*
- *Promotes a sense of satisfaction that comes from helping another person to learn, grow and develop.*
- *Enables the passing of business, technical and ethical knowledge gained from years of professional experience.*

### ***The Advisor does not:***

- *Do the work for Seekers or make decisions for them.*
- *Represent the Seeker at job interviews.*
- *Set corporate goals for Seekers.*
- *Develop over-reliance by the Seeker for assistance in addressing minor problems or questions.*
- *Attempt to soften an important, but critical observation about the Seeker just to spare feelings.*
- *Normally provide advice on issues that are not professional in nature.*

## **SEEKER**

The Seeker is a person responsible for a nascent company's interest who recognizes the responsibilities of self-development and the need for the guidance and support of a more knowledgeable company/person. The Seeker is the service disabled veteran small business owner or a key designee. The Seeker is interested in learning from an Advisor whose experiences, wisdom and expertise may be drawn from his/her business and personal knowledge, knowledge of dealing with the Federal Government and Contracting regulations, in short, his/her experience and successes. The Seeker recognizes that in order to improve oneself and enhance business and career development, there must be opportunities to change and grow, accept constructive criticism and participate in meaningful dialogue and communication. A Seeker is an active listener with the ability to glean information from many sources. He/she may be questioning, inquiring and engaging in order to take full advantage of the Advisor's teaching and guidance. Ultimately, the Seeker is responsible for his or her own and personal and business acumen in terms of growth, actions, values and work ethic.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

- *Objectively evaluate his or her own motivation and set realistic goals.*
- *Maintain an effective Advisor-Seeker relationship on concerns related to corporate business practices.*
- *Remain an NVSBC member in good standing.*
- *Consider the advice and guidance of the Advisor and take action for improvement.*
- *Be proactive at asking questions or soliciting advice.*
- *Initiate meetings with the Advisor, as appropriate.*
- *Recognize that the Advisor is not being compensated for their time or advice; therefore, express your appreciation regularly.*

### **BENEFITS**

- *Increases self-awareness and personal growth.*
- *Enhances leadership development and options.*

- *Manages time wisely because you can quickly ask advice from someone who has already experienced many of the problems you will encounter.*
- *Develops new ideas and new skills.*
- *Increases knowledge of federal contracting*
- *Capitalizes on the potential of the individual.*
- *Promotes management succession.*

## **ADVISING PHASES**

### **INTRODUCTORY PHASE**

In the initial phase of the Advisor-Seeker relationship, sharing information about backgrounds, values, professional and business qualifications and experiences will help to allow the two to become acquainted with each other. The Advisor must gain an understanding of the Seeker's professional background and experiences and measure that against his/her business goals, objectives and potential to make an assessment of immediate and ongoing needs. The Seeker must be willing to discuss his or her business goals, and provide a list of strengths and weaknesses in order for an effective program to be designed to benefit both the business and its leadership corps.

### **IMPLEMENTATION PHASE**

During this phase, the Advisor and Seeker will establish ground rules for the professional relationship. They will jointly determine such issues as how they will relate to each other, when and under what circumstances meetings will take place and how advice and guidance will be given and acted upon.

The Seeker may participate in a variety of work experiences such as observing the Advisor in a workplace setting, attending seminars, training and developmental assignments, participating in discussions with the Advisor, or obtaining other experiences which contribute to business and professional development. In turn, the Advisor will observe the Seeking for signs of increasing independence, building of confidence and the need to move the relationship to another phase.

### **TERMINATION PHASE**

The professional Advisor-Seeker relationship must be clearly terminated so that the Seeker may continue her or his professional business development independently, work in a teaming arrangement before seeking to begin advising others. At this point, the Advisor must be willing and able to gracefully remove him or herself from the relationship in a formal termination.

### **EVALUATION PHASE**

Periodic joint evaluations of the Advisor-Seeker relationship will be made throughout the advising period to determine progress of both parties.