

# Mentorship and Sponsorship

Mentors and, increasingly, sponsors (who use political capital to promote a protégé) are invaluable for career advancement; when they are seen as allies as well, they can help diversify workplaces and build inclusiveness.

## WHY IT MATTERS

Trained and mindful mentorship and sponsorship can help increase an employee's self-confidence, influence, advancement, compensation, and feelings of safety—contributing to engagement and well-being. Extra attention to members of nondominant groups, who may have more difficulty securing mentors and sponsors, can lead to their greater commitment and more frequent promotion.

## MENTORSHIP AND SPONSORSHIP ARE EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE WHEN...

- mentors and sponsors develop the skills and perspectives of allies and coaches—intercultural competence, listening, empathy, advocacy
- underrepresented employees have at-least-equal access to mentors and sponsors
- mentoring programs support business objectives with goals, metrics, and feedback
- participants balance power dynamics and respect confidentiality

### ACT

*Design relationships to work for all parties*

- Whether through a formal program or informal networking, make thoughtful matches between mentors and mentees, sponsors and protégés.
- Create and revisit an explicit agreement that addresses mutual expectations, ground rules, goals, identity differences, confidentiality, and when to move on.
- When designing a formal mentoring program, confirm leaders' commitment and involve prospective mentees.

*Commit to learning*

- Form relationships with people who are different from you, and work to expand your intercultural competence and allyship skills.

- Both parties: be open to what you don't know and be receptive to feedback.

*Overcome bias*

- Mentors and sponsors: move past implicit bias to recognize and support talent beyond the usual suspects.
- Be sensitive to the extra demands that people from underrepresented groups, especially the "onlys," have on their time and attention. Don't expect people from underrepresented groups to educate others.
- Firm leaders: be receptive to the recommendations of sponsors, especially when they are expending their personal political capital.