

Certified in Financial Forensics  
**Mentoring Program  
Guidelines**

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Dear Protégé Candidate:

As chair of the CFF Credential Committee, I have had the privilege to work with and get to know so many other forensic professionals from around the country and globe. It is this exposure to networking and sharing information between my peers that allows me to continue to grow professionally. Therefore, I am very pleased that one of the CFF Credential Committee's key initiatives has been to launch the CFF Mentor Program.

The program's purpose is to help new and potential CFFs grow professionally by developing relationships with more experienced CFFs willing to give some of their time back to the profession. It is an excellent program for CPAs looking to enter the forensic accounting arena as well as CFFs who have been practicing for a few years and need some guidance for growing and expanding their practices.

The CFF Credential Committee is committed to having a strong community of CFFs with the tools and resources needed to be successful. The CFF Mentor Program is a valuable resource that can make a significant difference in your professional career. Therefore, we encourage you to sign up and actively participate today.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Harris', with a long, sweeping underline.

Robert R. Harris, CPA/CFF, CGMA  
Chair, CFF Credential Committee

# Mentoring Guidelines

The definition of a mentor is a trusted counselor or guide. A mentor has the ability to lead, inspire and motivate his or her protégé by expanding his or her awareness, insight, and perspective. Mentors are a powerful force for developing successful professionals. Scholars and business leaders agree that every successful person needs a mentor.

Mentoring takes many forms, including the following:

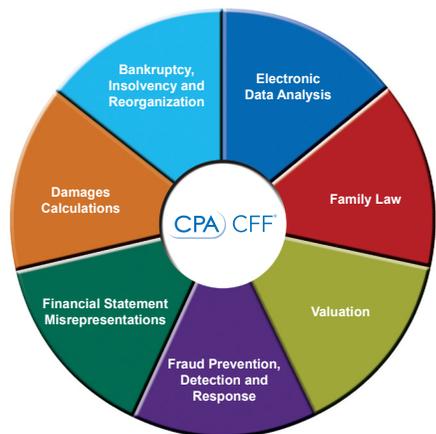
- Traditional one-on-one mentoring, either in a peer relationship or a senior-to-junior relationship
- Network or group mentoring
- Radical mentoring, which is short-term and skill-focused
- Formal or informal mentoring

## Program Objectives

The goal of the CFF Mentor Program is to provide a way for AICPA members to learn about the forensic accounting profession, develop their professional skills and better serve their clients through the help of other more experienced and accomplished forensic professionals.

## How the Mentor Program Works

Mentors and their protégés are carefully matched by the CFF Mentor Task Force, based on the areas of interest indicated on the protégé application. The task force will contact each program participant and provide them with the profile of their prospective mentor/protégé. Protégés will make the initial contact with the mentor. Mentors and protégés will plan to meet, at a minimum, once a quarter for a one-hour conference call. More frequent brief meetings may take place depending upon individual preferences, goals and by agreement of the mentor and protégé.



## Topics for Discussion

Mentors and protégés will discuss ways to improve professionally. Some common subjects for conversation include:

- Practice development and ways to improve client relations
- Employee/employer relations
- Management practices
- Application of common forensic methods
- Guidance/recommendation on resources
- Contacts and referrals
- Goals and progress toward goals
- Continuing education recommendations
- Networking
- Preparation for the CFF Examination
- Gaining experience in the forensic profession
- Gaining knowledge of the resources provided by the AICPA to the forensic accounting profession

Program participants will be encouraged to avoid conversation and offering/asking opinions regarding specific cases/engagements. The meetings should not be used to obtain specific information for an actual or pending case or other matter (e.g., assumptions, methodologies, discount rates, adjustments, etc.). The program also is not intended as a report review service. However, if either participant wishes to hire/engage the services of the mentor or protégé, then they should do so under normal business protocols (i.e., engagement letter).

The following guidelines will:

- Detail the roles and responsibilities of the mentor and protégé
- Provide tips for a successful mentoring partnership
- Provide sample forms for periodic evaluations: **Appendix A: Six-Month Review** and **Twelve-Month Review**

# I. Roles and Responsibilities

## A. Mentor

A mentor provides guidance and recommendations to help the protégé develop his or her professional skills and serves as a resource to the forensic accounting profession. A mentor also asks the tough questions, communicates the unwritten rules of how the industry works and assimilates the protégé into the financial forensic field.

### Qualifications

A mentor must have the following qualifications:

- CFF and member of the AICPA
- Credibility with colleagues and peers
- The respect of peers and other professionals
- Expertise in his or her field of knowledge
- A desire to help the protégé
- A willingness to commit time and energy to the relationship
- Ability to help the protégé set and attain goals

### Responsibilities

Typical mentor responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Acting as a resource for information about the profession
- Helping the protégé develop new/improved capabilities in terms of skills and knowledge in order to reach important goals
- Establishing trust with the protégé and maintains confidentiality
- Listening actively

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*“My mentor has been invaluable to me as a professional resource, whether I am looking for guidance on gray areas of theory application, discussing best practices for practice management issues, or looking for thoughts on databases, subscription services, etc. Having a voice outside your firm can provide a mutually beneficial relationship that evolves over time. Whether you are new to the field or are looking to expand your current practice into a new industry area, this is the first resource you should utilize.”*

**Tim Cowley**  
**CPA/ABV/CFF, CFE**

- Giving guidance on how to become a CFF and start and/or develop a forensic practice
- Identifying informative financial forensic reference books and continuing education, including resources provided by the AICPA to forensic professionals
- Challenging the protégé to think and analyze options
- Sharing unique professional experiences
- Helping the protégé identify specific goals
- Serving as a sounding board for ideas
- Providing career guidance
- Providing vision and insight
- Offering support, advice and counsel
- Providing encouragement for building self-confidence and stronger self-esteem
- Serving as a solid role model
- Offering constructive and meaningful feedback and critical analysis

## **Benefits**

For mentors, the rewards of mentoring are:

- The personal satisfaction of giving back to the CFF community
- A legacy of personal knowledge, insight and experience
- Professional enhancement, higher visibility and prestige
- Expansion of professional network

## **B. Protégé**

The CFF Mentor Program is designed primarily for the benefit of the protégé. Therefore, the protégé will assume the majority of the responsibility for the quality of outcomes in a mentoring partnership. A protégé seeks constructive feedback as well as encouragement, and has a strong commitment to professional growth and the ambition to succeed.

### **Qualifications**

A protégé must have the following qualifications:

- AICPA membership
- Desire to learn the practice of forensic accounting
- Ambition to succeed
- Both intelligence and common sense
- Strong commitment to goals and personal responsibility
- Ability to listen and follow through with directions

### **Responsibilities**

It will be the protégé's responsibility to:

- Make the initial contact with the mentor
- Schedule and initiate the quarterly phone meetings
- Establish the meeting agenda and send it to the mentor prior to regular meetings
- Maintain confidentiality at all times
- Respect the mentor's time

In addition to the required procedures above, a protégé must:

- Be receptive to feedback and coaching
- Assess his or her individual needs
- Openly share success and failures
- Take advantage of opportunities presented by the mentor

- Follow through on commitments and goals set during the mentoring sessions
- Admit mistakes and take responsibility for them
- Have a personal vision, specific goals and a good grasp of his/her own reality
- Have confidence to tactfully and respectfully disagree with his/her mentor when necessary
- Actively participate in the mentoring relationship
- Develop and utilize the skills of the profession

### **Benefits**

For protégés, the rewards of being mentored are:

- Assistance in defining career goals, strategies and options
- Help in building confidence to grow beyond the usual expectations
- Personalized education geared toward specific needs
- A sounding board for ideas and approaches
- Referrals to experts with specialized industry knowledge
- Knowledge of continuing education programs
- Recommendations for helpful forensic articles and texts
- Knowledge of the pathway to the CFF credential
- Familiarity with the CFF Body of Knowledge

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*“My mentor has always been a source of valuable recommendations and motivation. I highly recommend the CFF Mentor Program for new CFFs who are trying to connect with the forensic community and would like guidance from an experienced CFF to sign up as soon as possible.”*

**Jolene N. Fraser**  
**CPA/CFF, CFE**

## II. Establishing the Relationship

### A. Mentor

To prepare for your first meeting, you should:

- Summarize your goals and expectations for the mentoring partnership
- Review your protégé's profile and work experience
- Review additional protégé questions, if applicable
- Address logistics of quarterly meetings, i.e., "How should we work together? Will we stay in touch between meetings, and how?"

Next, interview your protégé. In preparation for that first one-on-one meeting, review the interview questions below. Use these questions as a guideline to help you begin to get to know your protégé personally and professionally:

- What is important to you?
- What is your background and forensic accounting experience?
- Which area have you practiced the most?
- What areas of financial forensics would you like to develop?
- What skills do you have with which you are confident?
- Which forensic accounting courses have you taken, or plan to take?
- Which forensic accounting texts do you refer to most?
- How do you use these skills on the job?
- Which skills do you desire to develop?
- How can I help you develop these skills?
- What attracted you to this program?
- Six months from now, how would you like to have grown as a result of this mentoring relationship?
- What one thing can I do to ensure a positive experience for you in this relationship?
- What should I expect from you in this mentoring partnership?

## B. Protégé

To prepare for your first meeting, you should:

- Prepare an updated résumé and or a detailed summary of your work experience
- Summarize your personal and professional goals
- Identify your goals and expectation of the mentoring relationship
- Prepare a personal SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis to help you and the mentor determine on which areas to focus
- Identify questions you have about the CFF and forensic practices
- Be familiar with the resources available at [aicpa.org/FVS](http://aicpa.org/FVS) as they can assist with topics of discussion

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*“Forensic services cover a vast amount of information, not all of which is conveniently written down. Mentors can help emerging practitioners navigate practice and development issues, provide suggestions for resources and solutions and generally help practitioners get plugged into the practice.”*

**James F. Hart**

**CPA/ABV/CFF, CIRA, MBA, CFE**

# Mentoring Agreement Form

We are voluntarily entering into a mentoring partnership, which we expect to benefit both the mentor and protégé. We want this to be a productive and rewarding experience, with most of our time together spent in open, candid discussions. To minimize the possibility of confusion in our mentoring relationship, we have agreed to the following:

Duration of the mentoring partnership (recommended minimum is 12 months)

\_\_\_\_\_

Frequency of the meetings \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Approximate amount of time to be invested by the mentor \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated ending date of partnership \_\_\_\_\_

Specific role of the mentor (model, guide, observe and give feedback, recommend developmental activities, facilitate learning, suggest/provide resources, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Objectives and additional points \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The skill areas to be the focus of the current development period are noted on the individual development plan maintained by the protégé.

We agree to a no-fault conclusion of this partnership if, for any reason, it seems appropriate.

\_\_\_\_\_ Mentor/Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Protégé/Date \_\_\_\_\_

This form is an agreement between the mentor and the protégé. Information gathered as part of this program will not be shared outside of the AICPA and the CFF Credential Committee.

# Appendix A

## Six-Month Review

Protégé name \_\_\_\_\_

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 indicating “strongly agree” and 1 indicating “strongly disagree,” please indicate your degree of satisfaction with the following aspects of your mentoring relationship:

	Rating 1 – 5
Mentoring partnership is working well	
Meetings are regular	
Appropriate amount of time has been devoted to program	
Personal and professional development issues have been established	
Clear goals and objectives have been set	
Trust and confidentiality have been established	
<input type="checkbox"/> Mentor <input type="checkbox"/> Protégé listens well and is responsive (Indicate person being evaluated)	
Progress has been observed over the past six months in areas chosen for development	
Barriers encountered during mentoring process have been resolved	
Topics to be discussed over the next six months have been defined	
Program is meeting expectations	
Mentoring relationship should continue	

Additional comments:

# Appendix B

## Twelve-Month Review

Protégé name \_\_\_\_\_

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 indicating “strongly agree” and 1 indicating “strongly disagree,” please indicate your degree of satisfaction with the following aspects of your mentoring relationship:

	Rating 1 – 5
Program met my expectations	
Developmental goals and objectives were accomplished	
Mentoring relationship will continue on an informal basis at official end of program	
Meetings were held regularly throughout the year	
Topics defined for discussion were covered during the program	
Program was worthwhile	
Program should be utilized by colleagues	
Learned a great deal from <input type="checkbox"/> mentor <input type="checkbox"/> protégé (Indicate person being evaluated)	
Allowed to devote the time necessary to the program	

Additional comments:





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