



National Association of Government Communicators (NAGC) Mentor Value Program (MVP)

Introduction

As a member of the National Association of Government Communicators (NAGC), you have access to one of the greatest benefits NAGC has to offer– the Mentor Value Programs (MVP). MVP is available to current NAGC members, offers unparalleled opportunities to meet communication professionals and to explore many career options. The program operates at all levels; local, state and federal and more than a dozen different jobs, so participants have the opportunity to be matched at both a level and job, which meets their needs.

In order to meet individual needs, MVP offers considerable flexibility. MVP members may not yet know how they intend to use their newly attained communication skills and can find the program helps them explore a variety of career options. Participants who already have plans to specialize in a specific practical area can use the program to meet practitioners in the field and learn more about their communications world. Others can consult with mentors for practical advice on the job search process and use the MVP as a networking resource.

Mentors are NAGC members who are seasoned professionals and have volunteered to answer questions, provide career-related advice and coaching and help bridge the gap between the academic environment and the outside professional world. NAGC MVP mentors may vary considerably in their individual approach to mentoring, depending on their experience, time availability and personality. However, there are specific mentor requirements as part of the program, to ensure all participants receive value.

MVP is designed to:

- Provide support, knowledge transfer and networking opportunities.
- Enhance communication and collaboration at all levels within the profession.
- Develop a network of mentors who are respected and recognized for their valuable role in communications.
- Create a learning environment where mentoring is an integral part of the way NAGC does business.

MVP will help mentees take charge of their career by helping the mentee:

- Gain exposure and access to employees at different levels.
- Gain an understanding of communication principles, values, relationships and unwritten rules.
- Make achievable, realistic career plans, identify developmental opportunities, and increase professional, technical and managerial skills.
- Improve individual performance, productivity and preparedness to pursue professional/technical opportunities.

How does it work?

The Mentor Value Program Coordinator serves as the liaison between new and current communications professionals. The MVP Coordinator recruits volunteers into the program and helps select appropriate mentors. The position also conducts the initial orientation for all MVP members (mentors and mentees) on all aspects of the program.

NAGC members who volunteer to mentor new NAGC members are asked to complete a mentor profile sketch. Mentor profiles are organized by profession areas (e.g. media, journalist, writer/editor, etc.), and includes the experience level, name of the mentor's government agency/employer, area(s) of specialization or expertise, work level (local/state/federal) as well as outside interest. Some mentors also provide a résumé or a professional bio.

The mentor profile also offers the opportunity to voluntarily self identify additional factors to whom they could provide specific additional assistance.

New members who would like to participate in the program should complete a Mentee Form or contact the MVP Coordinator.

The "Nuts & Bolts"

- As a Mentee, think about **what you are looking** for in a mentor – as far as practice area(s), experience, personality traits or other characteristics.
- **Begin** by completing a Mentor or Mentee profile sketch.
- The MVP Coordinator will match you up with an NAGC mentor whose background and experience **match your interests**.
- Both you and your mentor will **sign** the "MVP Agreement."
- Now it is your responsibility to schedule a meeting with the mentor. **Please contact the mentor immediately**. In some cases, as with a geographically distant mentor, it may be more practical to speak by telephone or to communicate via e-mail.

Okay, I've chosen a mentor. *Now what?*

Before meeting with a mentor, take some time to think about what you expect to get out of the experience. Remember, the mentor can't read your mind. Mentors sometimes report, while an individual was very likeable or impressive, the mentor wasn't sure what type of help the person sought. It is *your* job to ask for the information you seek. The MVP Coordinator can help if you are having difficulty articulating your mentoring objectives.

Mentee/Mentor Meetings

Whenever possible it is encouraged to have face-to-face meetings. However geography can inhibit the ability of individuals to get together and thus teleconferences, social network sites, and instant messaging may be an acceptable way to stay in touch. At a minimum, there are three required meetings a year. Additionally, mentors and mentees are highly encouraged to attend the yearly NAGC Communication School and participate in the special session for the MVP program – as an added bonus! Mentors and mentees are encouraged to interact as frequently as is beneficial.

Required meeting 1

- **Discuss and complete** a Mentee Development Plan.
- **Set expectations** of the mentor and mentee.
- **Learn how NAGC can help you.** Ask questions on how NAGC can help grow you as an individual.
- **Talk about** employment in the agency and industry and what career paths are available. If the mentor's agency has a recent hire with whom you can talk, suggest the person join your group.
- **Review/critique** mentee's resume – this is not a re-write.
- **Leave time for Q&As.** Make sure you build in enough time for a Q&A session.

Required meeting 2

- **Touchstone:** Spend time going over the mentee development plan. Identify progress and barriers and ways forward to meet the end goals.
- **Bring in current news or communications case study.** Discussing a real-life communication situation will increase the impact of the visit. Creating active dialogue around a hot issue is an interesting way to learn about the way your mentor approaches communication decisions. Case studies for MVP are available on the NAGC web site or through the MCP Coordinator.

Required meeting 3

- **Touchstone:** Spend time going over the mentee development plan. Identify progress and barriers and ways forward to meet year-end goals.

Optional Meetings

As agreed upon between the mentor and mentee.

- Consider a site visit to the Mentor's job site
- Participate in a communication training together
- Yearly NAGC Communications School

NAGC Communication School – Session for Mentors and Mentees

Each year, NAGC will hold a 1-hour session for mentors and mentees. The first part of the session is devoted to expanding the mentor/mentee relationship. The second part of the session is time for the mentor/mentee to meet and have quality discussion.

Mentee Expectations and Commitments

The Commitment

This is volunteer program for both the mentors and mentees. Your commitment to the program begins once you are matched with a mentor. At this point you will have been given the pertinent information to contact him or her.

Your Role

The partnership between a mentor and mentee is built upon a foundation of trust, respect and professionalism. A mentor is someone in whom you can establish a relationship during your first few years in NAGC and potentially after. The program doesn't guarantee a new job or a successful job hunt as a result, however it does provide for networking and the free-flow exchange of ideas.

Your Responsibilities

It is your responsibility to:

- Respect the mentor's time by keeping appointments and promptly returning calls or emails.
- Communicate your interests and goals clearly.
- Set realistic expectations of the mentor.
- Set an agenda for meetings based on your group's interests.
- Be proactive. Ask the Mentor how he/she would like to be contacted, and take action.
- Follow up on recommendations / contacts that the mentor provides in a timely manner.
- Do the necessary self, market and company assessments in order to clearly articulate your interests. This will guide the mentor at the beginning of the relationship.
- Respect the relationship - keep confidential discussions confidential.

Ingredients of a Successful First Mentoring Experience

The following factors contribute to a successful mentoring relationship. This list is a start . . .

- **Find out about the mentor.** In addition to the biography you receive, do research on the mentor prior to the visit. Look for boards on which they serve, awards received or recent news articles on them.
- **Research the mentor's agency and function.** Mentors represent a wide group of agencies and functions. Prepare yourself by researching the intricacies of each of these areas. The better prepared you are ahead of time, the more you will understand during the visit or ongoing mentor meetings.
- **Communicate clearly and timely.** Prior to the visit, send the mentor your resume and a short excerpt about you. If the mentor asks for specific details about you, make sure to provide as much information as possible. The better you communicate your interests before the relationship begins, the more you and the mentor will get out of it.
- **Be flexible.** Mentors are busy so be extremely flexible regarding the places and times you are available to meet with them. Mentors and mentee may want to offer to meet for coffee or talk on the phone.