

# There's Strength in Numbers — Try a Mentorship Cohort Program



Finding meaningful connections and guidance is important to all your association chapter members. But it's particularly vital for those association chapter members who are in the early and mid-stages of their careers.



Some of the top reasons people give for joining association chapters include connecting with other people like them – personally and professionally — and learning and participating in training or education. While traditional mentorship programs can be highly effective for technical training, they can fall short when it comes to networking and connection, especially when people who are young and fresh in their careers are paired with a mentor who is older and may not have the connections or the interests the newer career member is looking for.

Enter membership cohort programs. They provide an interesting, engaging way to better connect members with each other as well as with more appropriate mentors, through small group structured engagements. Either virtually or in person, members participate in mentorship sessions while connecting and networking with other members who are looking for similar things.

## **3 ways mentorship cohort programs help entry level and mid-career members**

**Multiple perspectives and tailored networking in one location.** Traditional association chapter mentorship programs match individuals one-on-one. That pairing is helpful, as the newer career members can learn from someone who has more experience. But at the same time, the one-on-one structure can limit the exposure a new- or mid-career employee is looking for related to the different facets of the industry they've joined.

Mentorship cohort programs bring together mentors and mentees from varied backgrounds, industries, and expertise. For those in the early and mid-stages of their careers, this diversity is invaluable, as it gives them an opportunity to get a well-rounded understanding of their field.

The collaborative nature of mentorship cohort programs not only enriches the learning experiences of members who participate, but it also provides built-in networking opportunities, with a community of like-minded professionals facing similar career challenges and milestones. It allows these members to more easily connect and work through things together, like a new way to approach a difficult project or a difficult employee, rather than hoping the individual mentor they're partnered with knows how to help.

**Structured learning paths for skill building.** Mentorship cohort programs have a structure that can be beneficial for early and mid-career professionals, many of whom are navigating, for the first time, the complexities that come with advancing their careers. Typically, participants in mentorship cohort programs are organized into small groups, led by a more experienced individual. Each group works through a curriculum tailored to their specific needs. Participants choose programs based on their interests and level of experience and work together through modules, workshops, and discussions covering topics pertinent to them that enhance both their technical and soft skills. This structured learning ensures cohort members have a more focused and goal-oriented approach to their mentorship, driven by the unique challenges and aspirations of those in the group.

**Community building for long-term career success.** The sense of community and lasting connections fostered by mentorship cohort programs is particularly impactful to early and mid-career professionals. Traditional mentorship often emphasizes the mentor-mentee relationship, which can sometimes lead to a more isolated experience for participants, when most of the focus is on the one-to-one relationship. Mentorship cohorts encourage collaboration and development of a support system.



This community-oriented approach contributes to improved engagement, as individuals feel a stronger connection to the association chapter, its mission and each other. And this sense of belonging goes beyond the program, as members of the same cohort provide each other with ongoing support and camaraderie.

The mentorship cohort program can often be more honest and meaningful than traditional mentoring, as it becomes its own small microculture that's beneficial to everyone that's participating. By harnessing the benefits of diverse perspectives, structured learning paths, and community building, association chapters can use mentorship cohort programs to provide invaluable support to the members exactly when they need it.

