



CDOT Emerging Small Business (ESB) Mentor-Protégé Program (MPP) Guidance & Expectations

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CDOT's ESB Mentor-Protege Program Purpose

Vision

Establish an interconnected statewide community that supports the long-term dynamic growth of ESB-certified firms in the transportation design and construction industry.

Mission

CDOT's ESB MPP is an integral component of the agency's commitment to support small businesses develop and expand their knowledge of how to do business with CDOT through intentional collaboration and guidance from CDOT staff. Through peer mentorship, the program fosters an environment that empowers members to address potential challenges and identify opportunities that small business owners in Colorado encounter when pursuing contract work with CDOT.

Expectation

This is largely a self-paced program, and teams get out of it what they put into it. By the end of the second year, most Mentor-Protege teams will have established a strong working relationship with proven success toward growing the capacity of the protege firm through a variety of business development initiatives and tracked goals. Teams will also graduate with a deeper understanding of CDOT processes and procedures by attending a variety of workshops, both with CDOT staff and other firms in the transportation industry.

Program Structure

The ESB Mentor-Protege Program capacity is set at 15 teams total.

Role of the Mentor

An established professional services consultant or general contractor focused primarily on the public construction and/or professional design industry. The firm must be willing to invest time and resources to teach critical business skills and agency engagement strategies and tactics to a protégé that is a certified ESB with the Colorado Department of Transportation.

Role of the Protege

A professional services consultant or contractor focused primarily on public construction and/or professional design industry. The firm must be willing to invest a sizable amount of time and resources to expand their knowledge and understanding of doing business with CDOT. This includes dedicating time of the owner and/or company employees to learn CDOT processes, meet with the Mentor regularly, work toward pre-identified business goals, etc..

Teaming

CDOT's ESB MPP requires teams to self-select one another; meaning that CDOT does not pair Mentor and Protégé firms together. Successful teams often have an existing relationship prior to entering the program, and CDOT recommends Protégés look to their existing networks for qualified Mentors. Teams should also consider the degree to which their firms' services are complementary as the ability to pursue mutually beneficial work opportunities is a significant asset while in the program. Teams often have multiple company representatives involved in and familiar with the ESB MPP.

Tenure

Teams commit to staying in the Program for up to two calendar years, provided the team remains in good standing (see CDOT [CDOT Expectations Good Standing Requirements](#)). Teams may voluntarily withdraw from the program at any time with no penalty, though only teams completing two years of the program in good standing will be eligible for the additional year of benefits available to Past Participants after program completion.

Program Eligibility

Proteges

- Active CDOT ESB certification at the following levels
 - Construction: Levels 1, 2, and SBE
 - Professional Services: Levels 1 and 2 (SBE consultants are not eligible to be Proteges in the ESB Mentor-Protege program)
- In business at least two full years
- Must be seeking business growth and expansion opportunities
- Solo entrepreneurs will only be considered if prepared to hire while in the program

Mentors

- Completed (closed out) at least three projects with CDOT as a prime or sub OR performed at least \$3M in CDOT contract work
- Be actively prequalified with CDOT (Master Pricing Agreement/technical prequal for consultants; B2GNow approved prequalification for contractors)
- DBE and ESB certified firms may be Mentors
- Past ESB MPP Proteges may be Mentors

Past Participants

- Mentor-Protege Teams who have remained in [good standing](#) and have completed their two-year commitment in the program are eligible to receive program benefits for up to one calendar year after completion.

Program Benefits

Teams that remain in good standing in the ESB MPP will avail themselves to several benefits related to working with CDOT, and CDOT is continuously seeking opportunities to improve the value of time spent by Teams in the program.

Upon program completion, teams come away with two years of hands-on experience with CDOT project staff and specialty units, as well as a community of contacts and resources from cohort members. Teams also gain a more holistic understanding of CDOT processes and requirements, impacting both the quality and the bottom line of infrastructure for Colorado taxpayers.

Cohort members get access to an impressive peer group of contractors and consultants that is collegial in nature and provides both networking and professional development insights. This group is a community of practice rather than one of competition.

In addition, the following tangible benefits are available to Teams remaining in good standing for two years during active program participation:

ESB MPP Participants (Active and Past Participants)

- Exclusive access to CDOT Chats and feedback opportunities
- Digital badge for use in marketing materials
- Access to an ESB MPP LinkedIn professional networking group
- Web presence and recognition on CDOT's website: www.codot.gov

Active Teams (All)

- Annual stipend for reimbursement (up to \$4,999):
 - Billability offset/time reimbursement
 - Career & Technical Education (CTE) credit reimbursement
- Profile on CDOT's website (www.codot.gov/mp)
- Recognition in the Connect2DOT newsletter (5,000+ subscribers)
- Unique opportunities to meet CDOT leadership, CDOT project staff, and Colorado Transportation Commissioners (when possible)
- Exclusive invitation to spotlight company at CDOT small business events throughout the year.

Active Teams & Past Participants (Consultants)

- One scoring point for the inclusion of any protege (past or present) that is ESB certified on the proposing team
- Two scoring points if the Prime Consultant is an active or one-year graduate participant in the CDOT Small Business Mentor/Protégé Program as a Mentor and uses an ESB Protégé still holding a certification (past or present)

Active Teams & Past Participants (Contractors)

- Potential scholarship to CDOT Annual Labor Compliance Training for Contractors

Application Process

During the summer months, CDOT sends out a communication providing specific information regarding application timelines as well as selection committee representatives. New applications will be available on an annual basis around early October and will be due back in early December, giving potential teams ample time to solidify their relationships and complete the required information.

Cohort Application - Anticipated Timeline

- August/September - Speed networking event for interested firms
- September/October - Applications available
- October/November - Applications due
- November/December - Selections communicated
- January/February - Past year recognitions and New Year kick-off

Application Scoring & Team Selection

A committee of various CDOT staff and industry representatives will review and score applications. The composition of this committee may change each year, and CDOT will make an effort to ensure equitable representation across disciplines and interests.

CDOT

- TBD

Associations

- TBD

Team Liaison

- Amara Hildebrand

Annual Program Event Calendar

Key Events

Calendar year

Q1: Kickoff & Graduating Team Recognition (*Active Teams & Past Participants*)

To set the stage for the new teams, CDOT staff from various regions, residencies, and specialties will give short presentations about how their work units are structured and what type of work they typically contract out. The new teams will introduce themselves and their goals for their time in the ESB MPP, and the graduating teams will be recognized for their accomplishments.

Q2: Active Team Event

The content for this event will be determined based on the needs of the active teams. Structure may include open discussion, panel discussions, short presentations, and/or networking opportunities, as best fits the subject matter of the event.

Q3: Annual MPP Stakeholder Meeting (*Active Teams & Past Participants*)

Each year CDOT will set aside time to receive feedback from current and former teams about how to improve the program. This session is intended to be an open dialogue between Mentors, Proteges, and CDOT staff, with the intent of identifying areas in need of further consideration and those that are key to the program's ongoing success.

Q4: Active Team End of Year Event

The content for this event will be determined based on the needs of the active teams. Structure may include open discussion, panel discussions, short presentations, and/or networking opportunities, as best fits the subject matter of the event.

Other Events

Each year, CDOT will host a variety of events for the Mentor-Protege Cohort. These include informal networking opportunities and virtual introductions to CDOT Region Staff. Event calendars will be provided with more information at the beginning of the year.

CDOT Chats (*Active Teams & Past Participants*)

CDOT will host quarterly CDOT Chats (quarters 2 - 4) that are available to all active program participants and alumni. These sessions will include process clarification and training opportunities from CDOT specialty units.

CDOT Chats will be virtual to allow all participants an opportunity to be involved, regardless of location. The schedule will be provided to teams at the beginning of each calendar year.

CDOT Expectations (Good Standing Requirements)

Team Commitment

Teams are expected to participate in the CDOT ESB MPP for two calendar years. Both the mentor and protégé will be expected to intentionally commit time to one another and submit quarterly goals and/or status updates toward goal achievement. CDOT will monitor progress against these goals on a quarterly basis, recognizing that some goals may take longer than one quarter to complete. Teams must collaborate with each other and CDOT, including the ESB MPP Team Liaison, and demonstrate progress toward achieving their set goals. If there is an issue, team members should work with the Team Liaison and/or CDOT toward resolving the matter.

This program is intended for mentors and protégés to strategically develop and genuinely foster a relationship that will lead to long-term success and opportunity. CDOT reserves the right to terminate participation of mentor-protégé teams for lack of commitment, nonresponsiveness, nonattendance and/or any other good cause that affects the integrity and mission of the program. Teams may voluntarily withdraw from the program at any time with no penalty, though only teams completing two years in good standing will be eligible for the additional year of benefits after program completion.

Attendance & Program Engagement

Engagement Meetings*

It is expected and required that teams meet with the Team Liaison at least once a quarter, and that mentors and protégés meet as frequently as necessary to demonstrate progress toward their goals at each quarterly meeting.

During these meetings, teams will be asked to give updates on the status of their goals and share successes and challenges. The ESB MPP Team Liaison will be in charge of capturing meeting notes and compiling status reports that will be shared with the CDOT Program Coordinator. Discussions will include, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- Progress on goals
- Urgent needs (if applicable)
- Engagement with Agency
- All technical and/or management assistance provided by mentor
- Specific resources provided or summary of current training

*At the end of each year in the program, the teams must provide feedback via a program survey generated by CDOT and the Team Liaison.

Cohort Events

As part of the ESB MPP cohort community, both Mentor **and** the Protege firm representatives are required to attend a minimum of two (2) CDOT Chats and three (3) Annual Program Events, in person when possible. Firms may send proxies that are engaged and familiar with the program. To help maintain an interconnected community, a portion of cohort events may take place outside of CDOT Region 1 (Denver Metro Area). More details about Cohort Events can be found in the [Annual Program Event Calendar](#) section of this document.

Quarterly Team Reporting Form

Teams will be required to jointly complete a short form-based questionnaire describing their program-related activities over the past 3 months.

- Track key performance indicators related to program impact
- Monitor team progress against goals

The Quarterly Team Report is due by the end of the month after the quarter closes:

- Q1 Jan-Mar Due April 30
- Q2 Apr-June Due July 31
- Q3 July-Sept Due Oct 31

Year End Team Reporting Form

In order to indicate their intent to continue in the program for another year, Teams must complete the Year End Team reporting form by midnight on December 31.

Failure to Remain in Good Standing

CDOT may elect to terminate a Team's participation in the program under the following circumstances:

1. If either Mentor or Protege no longer meet eligibility requirements
 - a. Assessed at the start of the calendar year
2. If either Mentor or Protege fail to remain in good standing
 - a. CDOT will make a concerted effort to assist Proteges whose Mentors do not remain in good standing
3. If either Mentor or Protege demonstrate conduct not in-line with CDOT values or the stated purposes of the ESB Program and the ESB Mentor-Protege Program
 - a. This shall be at CDOT's discretion

The Program Coordinator will notify the Team in writing of the intent to terminate should any of these constraints be breached. The Team may request a meeting with the Program Coordinator to discuss the reasons for termination or appeal the decision within 30 calendar days. Termination for cause will not result in adverse consequences for the Team; however, they will forfeit all program benefits effective 31 days after the notification of termination is issued.

Program Oversight

The ESB MPP is under the purview of the Transportation Commission, funded by state dollars, and administered by the CDOT Office Environmental Justice and Equity (EJE). Key administrative roles currently include a CDOT Program Coordinator, a Team Liaison, and a Team Selection/Program Advisory Committee.

Administrative Roles & Responsibilities

Program Coordinator: Administrative authority for the program and as such does not participate in application evaluation; however, the Program Coordinator will retain primary oversight of the requirements to remain in good standing. The Program Coordinator will prioritize any and all opportunities to find mutually beneficial ways to leverage the ESB MPP for both CDOT and the industry's gain, and the program is designed to flex with the shifting priorities of the agency.

Team Liaison: Provides an objective point of contact for mentors, proteges, and teams to troubleshoot any barriers they encounter while in the ESB MPP. The Team Liaison will periodically check in with teams to ensure that the relationship is working smoothly and will assist in identifying resources as needed by participants. The team liaison will also compile quarterly reporting submitted by the Teams.

Selection Committee: Provides objective assessment of a Team's appropriateness for the ESB MPP by evaluating key criteria determined each year by CDOT. Certain members of the Selection Committee may also participate in program activities and provide programmatic insights as available to the CDOT EJE and Program Coordinator.