



TENT

How Companies in the U.S. Can Mentor Afghan Refugees

A Step-by-Step Guide





TENT

About the Tent Partnership for Refugees

With more and more refugees displaced for longer periods of time, businesses have a critical role to play in helping refugees to integrate economically in their new host communities. The Tent Partnership for Refugees mobilizes the global business community to improve the lives and livelihoods of more than 36 million refugees who have been forcibly displaced from their home countries. Founded by Chobani’s founder and CEO Hamdi Ulukaya in 2016, we are a network of over 300 major companies committed to including refugees. Tent believes that companies can most sustainably support refugees by leveraging their core business operations and hiring, training, and mentoring refugees. The full list of Tent members can be found [here](#).¹ Find out more at www.tent.org.²

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In collaboration with:



About Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

Founded in 1939, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) is the largest faith-based national non-profit dedicated exclusively to serving refugees, asylum-seekers, and other immigrant communities in the U.S. Through more than 80 years of service and advocacy, LIRS has helped more than 500,000 migrants and refugees rebuild their lives in the U.S. Find out more at www.lirs.org.³

Mentorship program co-hosts:



About The Afghan-American Foundation

The Afghan-American Foundation (AAF) is a non-profit and non-partisan organization founded in January 2020 to advance and promote the interests of Afghan-Americans through thought leadership, policy advocacy, and public education and engagement. Our constituents are Afghans in the U.S. – a population expected to exceed 500,000 people at the conclusion of the current wave of resettlement. Over the past two years, AAF has focused primarily on a humane and dignified resettlement of evacuated Afghans through high-level advocacy. AAF seeks to serve, support, and represent Afghans-Americans through five main venues: principled advocacy; coalition building; civic engagement; education and enablement; and research and analysis. Find out more at www.afghanamericans.org.⁴

Hiring Our Heroes

A U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation Program

About Hiring Our Heroes

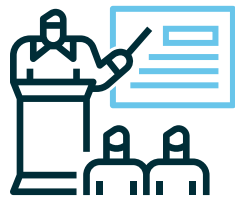
Hiring Our Heroes (HOH) is a 501(c)3 organization under the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation. The non-profit launched in March 2011 as a nationwide initiative to help veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses find meaningful employment. Working with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s vast network of state and local chambers, and other strategic partners from the public, private and nonprofit sectors, HOH has helped hundreds of thousands of veterans and military spouses to find meaningful employment through its comprehensive training and hiring events, fellowship programs, and online tools. HOH programs and services are available in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, and on military installations worldwide. Find out more at www.hiringourheroes.org.⁵

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How to use this guide

This guide advises companies on how their veteran's employee resource group (ERG) can partner with the Tent Partnership for Refugees (Tent) to establish and implement a professional mentorship program* for Afghan refugees in the U.S.

* The mentorship program referenced by this guide is a particular initiative designed and supported by Tent, and co-hosted by the Afghan-American Foundation⁶ and Hiring Our Heroes.⁷ To find out more about the program and how Tent can work with your company to set up and manage it, get in touch – email: info@tent.org.

With the U.S. military withdrawal and Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, the U.S. government implemented Operation Allies Welcome⁸ to help vulnerable Afghans resettle in the U.S. Through the operation, many Afghans were airlifted to the U.S., including those who worked on behalf of the U.S. military or government as interpreters, drivers, or embassy staff; those vulnerable due to their profession, including journalists, human rights activists, and humanitarian workers; and women and families. The U.S. government extended the program to Operation Enduring Welcome to welcome thousands of additional Afghans who will continue to arrive in the U.S. throughout 2023 and beyond.⁹

Many of the Afghans arriving through Operation Allies Welcome have professional experience, speak English well, and have the skills, experience, and education required to secure employment, yet they often need professional networks and a more robust understanding of how to find a job in the U.S.

Mentorship can be incredibly beneficial in helping Afghan refugees to find work and advance their careers – notably for mid- to high-skilled Afghans who have struggled to find jobs that match their skill sets. A mentorship program can help refugees to strengthen their professional skills, navigate new job markets, learn about workplace norms, and work towards career goals in the U.S. Mentors offer refugee mentees career guidance, provide feedback on resumes and cover letters, and help mentees to develop a professional network, which can drastically improve their professional career.

This guide includes a background section to provide context on Afghan refugees in the U.S, guidance for mentorship coordinators and mentors, and suggested content/topics for mentor-mentee meetings.

Appointing a mentorship coordinator

A mentorship coordinator will manage the mentorship program and be the official point of contact for mentors. Some mentorship coordinators may be a leader in a veteran's ERG, or work within a company's human resources (HR), corporate social responsibility (CSR), or diversity and inclusion (D&I) team, but they could hold any role.

Recruiting mentors

The mentorship coordinator will be responsible for recruiting employees to volunteer as mentors.

Mentorship can be an enriching professional and personal experience for both mentors and mentees. Refugee mentees bring new perspectives, talent, and skills from which mentors can learn. In addition, mentors have the opportunity to develop their leadership skills, communication abilities, and cross-cultural competencies.

Background on Afghans in the U.S.



A history of Afghans in the U.S. prior to August 2021

In addition to the 95,000 Afghans who have arrived in the U.S. since its military withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021, Afghan immigrant communities have been thriving in the U.S. for decades.

It is hard to know the exact number of Afghans living in the U.S. prior to August 2021 because of incomplete U.S. Census data. However, a 2018 survey of 100 Afghan community leaders in the U.S. found that there were likely between 360,000 to 400,000 Afghans living in the U.S. at the time.¹⁰ States with the largest Afghan populations in 2018 were California, Virginia, New York, and Texas. These four states continue to host large Afghan communities and are in the top five states where Afghans have been resettled since August 2021. Sixty-six percent of Afghans living in the U.S. in 2018 were born in Afghanistan, meaning that the majority are recent immigrants.

A large number of Afghans began arriving in the U.S. in 2010 as a part of the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program. Congress authorized the SIV program in 2009 to help protect Afghans targeted by the Taliban for their association with the U.S. government. Many SIV-holders worked as interpreters and translators, while others worked at the U.S. embassy or in various positions on military bases. The SIV program enabled eligible individuals and their immediate families to resettle in the U.S. as a way to thank them for their service and protect them from harm because of their affiliation with the U.S. From the 2017 fiscal year to the 2021 fiscal year, approximately 50,000 Afghan SIV-holders and their immediate families have arrived in the U.S.¹¹

In addition to the SIV program, thousands of Afghans have come to the U.S. through the refugee resettlement program. Afghan immigrants, though a fairly recent immigrant group in the U.S., have been contributing to local communities throughout the U.S. for decades.

Operation Allies Welcome

In August 2021, the U.S. government began Operation Allies Welcome to assist vulnerable Afghans, including those who worked alongside the U.S. military in Afghanistan, to safely resettle in the U.S. Interpreters, journalists, human rights activists, and women with children were also among those who came to the U.S. Through Operation Allies Welcome, the U.S. and its allies airlifted Afghans and allies out of the country in just a few weeks amidst chaotic and alarming scenes.¹²

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security was responsible for screening, vetting, and processing Afghan refugees arriving in the U.S. Through Operation Allies Welcome, Afghans were welcomed to certain U.S. military bases while they finished their processing, and nine non-profit refugee resettlement agencies were then tasked by the U.S. government to help integrate them in local communities throughout the country. These refugee resettlement agencies assisted Afghan refugees in finding apartments, registering their children in schools, and obtaining employment.

In September 2022, the Department of Homeland Security announced that all Afghan refugees had been moved from military bases to local communities. With this development, the Biden administration announced the shift of Operation Allies Welcome to Operation Enduring Welcome, signifying the next stages in the resettlement of Afghans.

How were Afghans received in the U.S.?

Afghans who arrived in the U.S. through Operation Allies Welcome received overwhelming support from political leaders and the American people. Across the country, both Republican and Democratic leaders were vocal in their support for Afghans and welcoming Afghans to their states.

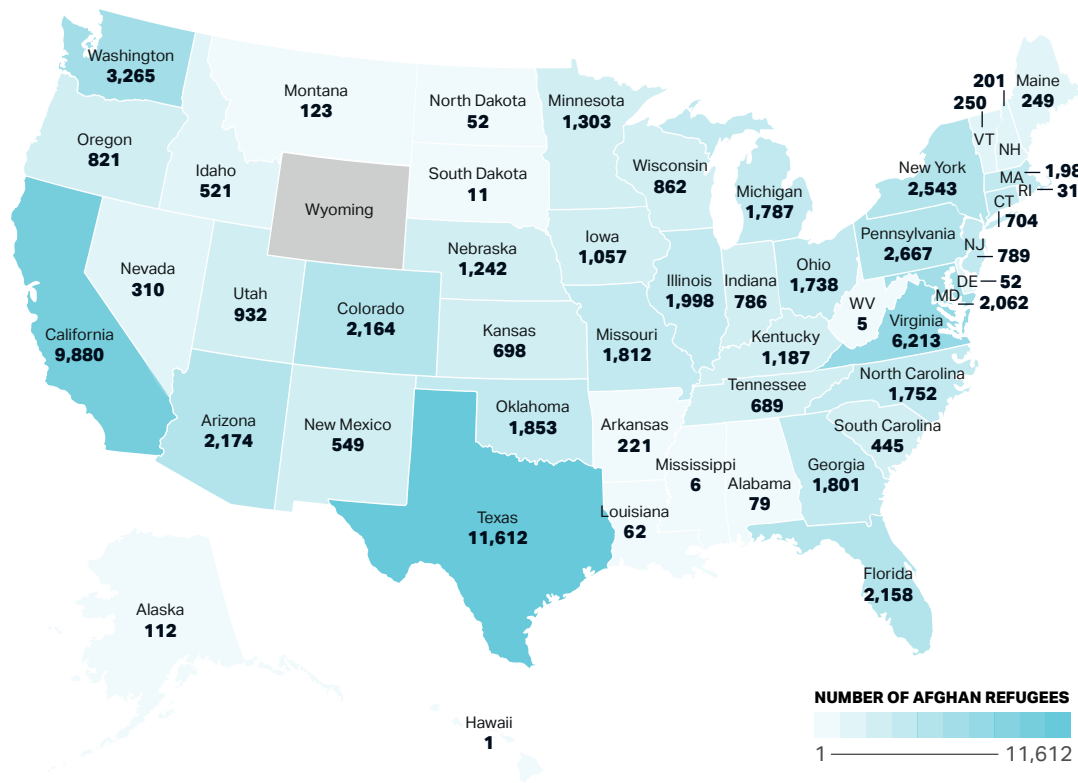
As well as support from political leaders, polls showed that the public was very supportive of resettling Afghans in the U.S. An August 2021 CBS News poll found that 81% agreed that the U.S. should help Afghans who worked with American troops to come to the U.S.¹³

The veteran community has been notably vocal in its support for resettling and integrating Afghans who worked with the U.S. military. Many veterans established close ties to Afghans during their service in Afghanistan. Veteran groups such as AfghanEvac, the Association of Wartime Allies, Hiring Our Heroes, and No One Left Behind have advocated for policies and established programs to help Afghans who made it to the U.S., as well as demanding action for those who remain in Afghanistan. Veterans groups understand the importance of ensuring that those who risk their lives for U.S. interests are protected and have a pathway to safety and permanence in the U.S.

A 2022 survey of resettled Afghans by the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) found that 81% of respondents reported feeling somewhat or very welcome in the U.S.¹⁴ Though most Afghans report feeling welcomed, they also report facing a number of challenges integrating into American society, including dealing with trauma from their evacuation and, if they entered the U.S. via humanitarian parole, uncertainty around their long-term legal status.

Where are Afghans resettling in the U.S.?

Forty-nine U.S. states, as well as the District of Columbia, have welcomed Afghans arriving through Operation Allies Welcome. As of 31 January 2023, the top 10 states that have welcomed the largest number of Afghans over the previous two years are California, Texas, Virginia, Washington, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Colorado, Arizona, and Illinois:¹⁵



What immigration statuses do Afghans have?

Afghans arriving in the U.S. are eligible for different immigration statuses based on several factors, including their work histories and backgrounds. Though Afghans will have different immigration statuses, they are all legally authorized to work and live in the country.

There are four main statuses newly arriving Afghans obtain upon arrival in the U.S.:

*Please note that this guide will use the term “Afghan refugee” when referring to individuals holding any of the statuses mentioned below.

- **SIV-holders:** individuals who worked for the U.S. government, U.S. military, or government contractors in Afghanistan for at least one year. Afghans with this status are legal permanent residents of the U.S.
- **SQ/SI parolees:** individuals who meet the criteria for an SIV but whose application for SIV status is still in process. The code “SQ/SI” is given by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to signify meeting the criteria for an SIV. Afghans with this status can apply to adjust their status to a legal permanent resident or “green card holder”
- **Refugees:** individuals who can demonstrate that they were persecuted or fear persecution due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership to a particular social group. Afghan refugees may be individuals who worked for the U.S. government or government contractors for less than one year in Afghanistan, worked for U.S.-funded programs or projects, or were employed by a U.S.-based media organization or non-governmental organization (NGO). Refugees can obtain legal permanent resident status after one year in the U.S.
- **Humanitarian parolees:** individuals who are granted temporary admission to the U.S. based on urgent humanitarian need. Afghan parolees may be individuals who were either unable to complete all requirements for SIV or refugee application processes prior to the August 2021 crisis, or who do not meet the criteria for any of the above statuses. While this status allows Afghans to live and work in the U.S., it is temporary and provides no direct path to legal residence or citizenship. Afghans with this status will need to adjust their status within two years

Humanitarian parolees may apply to adjust their status in a few different ways. First, they can apply for **Temporary Protected Status (TPS)**, which can protect Afghans from having to return to Afghanistan if their visa or legal status expires, as Afghanistan was added to the TPS list in May 2022 due to armed conflict and unsafe conditions in the country. Second, they can apply for **asylum** within one year of arrival. To win their asylum case and obtain asylee status, individuals need to prove that they have suffered persecution, or fear of persecution, due to their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.¹⁶ Finally, they can submit a family-based immigration petition. If Afghan refugees have a family member who is a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident, they can petition for them to adjust their status in the U.S.¹⁷

As the majority of Afghans who arrived in the U.S. after August 2021 came as humanitarian parolees, ensuring the continuation of legal status and, ultimately, adjusting their immigration status, will be a top priority if they are to remain legally in the U.S.



Are Afghans authorized to work in the U.S.?

All Afghans are authorized to work, whether they have SIV, refugee, SQ/ SI parolee, humanitarian parolee, asylum-seeker, or TPS status. Afghans holding any of these statuses are authorized to work because of their immigration status and do not require sponsorship from an employer.

Afghan refugees apply for documents such as Green Cards and Employment Authorization Document cards from USCIS.¹⁸ In addition, Afghan refugees receive Social Security cards from the Social Security Administration and can receive state identification cards or driver’s licenses.

Afghan refugees can use these documents to fulfill I-9 reporting requirements when applying for jobs.



*For answers to common questions about how to hire Afghan refugees, including critical information for HR teams, see Tent’s **“U.S. Employers’ Guide to Hiring Afghan Refugees”** resource.*

What kinds of educational and professional backgrounds do Afghans have?

Afghan refugees come to the U.S. with a wide variety of professional experiences, educational backgrounds, and skills. They can provide tremendous value to businesses.

Given the varied ways Afghans have arrived in the U.S., it is difficult to have a complete picture of educational and professional backgrounds.

ORR’s 2022 survey found high levels of education among Afghans in the U.S. Of survey respondents, 58% reported having a university or advanced degree, while just 3% reported not having completed any formal education.¹⁹ Based on informal data from refugee-focused non-profits in the U.S., approximately 20% of Afghans are high-skilled with English proficiency, 20% are mid-skilled with some English proficiency, and 60% are best suited for vocational roles with limited English language proficiency.

Data also indicates that Afghan SIV-holders, in particular, often have high levels of education and strong English language skills given their work alongside the U.S. military. Many SIV-holders worked as interpreters, translators, or drivers for the U.S. military or contractors. These individuals have worked alongside U.S. military personnel, often forming strong friendships during their service.

How are current Afghan refugees faring in terms of employment?

Many Afghans have the education, professional experience, and English skills to obtain mid- to high-skilled employment in the U.S. However, the ORR survey highlights hardships faced by recently-arrived Afghans in finding roles that are commensurate with their skills and experience. While most survey respondents

(65%) are employed or self-employed, more than one in three reported that their skills exceed what is needed for their current job, and less than half of respondents (38%) reported that they can cover household expenses. ORR noted that other data corroborates the difficulties Afghans are facing with high costs of living – particularly housing.

An August 2022 report from the International Rescue Committee, one of the refugee resettlement agencies that has helped Afghan refugees to find employment, details the economic circumstances of the Afghan refugees they have served. Across the U.S., the average wage for all Afghans placed in jobs is \$16.67 per hour. The top sectors for employment are accommodation and food services (21%), retail trade (14%), manufacturing (12%), transportation and warehousing (11%), and food manufacturing (10%).²⁰ The top job titles of this population – cashier, warehouse worker, food preparer, and driver – show that many are working in entry-level jobs for which they may be overqualified based on education levels and previous work experience.

Mentorship can help Afghans to obtain mid- to high-level employment in the U.S., as mentors work with mentees to expand their professional networks and gain a better understanding of the U.S. job market.

Resources

For more information about Afghan refugees in the U.S., see:

- Full details on Operation Allies Welcome, including an explanation of the arrival process, press releases, and details on benefits for parolees, can be found [here](#)²¹ ([this fact sheet](#)²² details the most pertinent information)
- LIRS’ [website](#)²³ contains information about how to help Afghan refugees
- The Refugee Council USA [website](#)²⁴ provides various resources to support Afghan allies, including how to volunteer and advocate
- The Welcoming America [website](#)²⁵ contains resources for community leaders, organizations, and individuals seeking to support Afghans
- [Women for Afghan Women](#)²⁶ is a grassroots civil society organization dedicated to protecting the rights of Afghan women and girls in Afghanistan and New York

For more information about hiring refugees, see:

- Tent’s [“U.S. Employers’ Guide to Hiring Refugees” resource](#)²⁷
- Tent’s [“U.S. Employers’ Guide to Hiring Afghan Refugees” resource](#)²⁸
- The E-Verify [website](#)²⁹ for more information about the web-based system through which employers electronically confirm the employment eligibility of their employees
- The USCIS [website](#)³⁰ for more information about immigrant work authorization and documentation, including helpful videos explaining [how to complete the Form I-9](#)³¹

- The United States Department of Justice’s Immigrant and Employee Rights (IER) Section of the Civil Rights Division helps employers and workers to understand the anti-discrimination provision of the Immigration and Nationality Act. The Immigrant and Employee Rights Section in particular helps employers and workers to understand the documentation needed to fulfill Form I-9 requirements when applying for a job. Some helpful links include:
 - The IER [website](#),³² which contains resources for employers
 - [This fact sheet](#)³³ about refugee and asylee work authorization and documentation
- The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [website](#),³⁴ which offers guidance for employers to prevent national origin discrimination in the workplace. Employers hiring Afghans, like any other employee, should be aware of anti-discrimination provisions relating to national origin discrimination

For references for Afghans about adjusting to life in the U.S., see:

- The [Afghan-American Foundation](#)³⁵ advances the interests and priorities of the Afghan community through advocacy, research, coalition building, civic engagement, and education
- [The International Refugee Assistance Project](#)³⁶ provides legal resources for Afghans
- ORR keeps an [online directory](#)³⁷ of refugee-serving organizations throughout the U.S.

- [World Education Services](#)³⁸ offers international credential evaluation for individuals with degrees from other countries
- Afghans seeking assistance with learning English can often find free courses at local community colleges – an online search for “ESL classes” in your location should show some options

Guide for mentorship coordinators



This guide will equip you with the information your veteran's ERG needs to establish a mentorship program for Afghan refugees in partnership with Tent. Participating in this program is an opportunity for you and your colleagues who volunteer as mentors to develop inclusive leadership skills, communication abilities, and cross-cultural competencies.

As mentorship coordinator, you will be responsible for recruiting your colleagues to become mentors – veterans, in particular, given their experiences and potential connections to Afghanistan – serving as a point of contact for mentors and Tent, organizing administrative aspects of the program, and more.

Tent has also produced a separate [implementation guide](#)³⁹ that outlines the logistical components of this particular mentorship program, including a timeline and FAQs. Please email info@tent.org if you have not received this or are having issues accessing the document.

The benefits of mentorship for your colleagues and company

Serving as a mentor is an opportunity for employees to share their knowledge and expertise with Afghan refugees who can benefit greatly from this guidance. This individualized support will help Afghan mentees to settle on career goals and strategy, build professional networks, navigate the U.S. job market, and find and secure more advanced jobs.

Participating in this mentorship program will also help your colleagues to strengthen their communication abilities and develop cross-cultural competencies. Furthermore, your company will be demonstrating its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion by supporting a marginalized group. Your colleagues will be proud to see their company supporting one of the most vulnerable populations in the U.S.

Most importantly, working with a mentor can have a hugely positive impact on the professional success of an Afghan refugee. By serving as role models, providing resources on how to succeed in the workplace, and helping mentees to build their professional networks, mentors have an opportunity to change the course of an Afghan refugee's life.

Components of a mentorship program for Afghan refugees

- Mentors and mentees meet at least six times during a six-month period, either online, through meetings at your company's office, or informal gatherings outside of the office. Meetings can happen more frequently if a mentor, mentee, or your company would prefer (see the [Guide for mentors](#) chapter for meeting resources, including mentor-mentee exercises)
- Mentors and mentees discuss the local job search process, including tips on resumes, cover letters, and LinkedIn
- Mentors and mentees reflect on cultural norms in the workplace in the U.S.
- Mentors support mentees to access a professional network in their field(s) of interest
- Mentors and mentees learn from each others' professional experiences
- Mentors and mentees practice English as much as possible
- Mentors and mentees develop leadership and communication skills by providing feedback to each other



Overview of steps to implement a mentorship program for Afghan refugees

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01

Step one:

Recruit mentors at your company

One of your primary responsibilities as mentorship coordinator is to recruit employees at your company to serve as mentors. Tent recommends recruiting mentors from a variety of professional and personal backgrounds.

Veterans would likely be excellent mentors given their experiences and potential connections to Afghanistan. Many veterans who served in Afghanistan are familiar with Afghan culture and customs, which helps when working with Afghan mentees. In particular, veterans may feel a connection with Afghan SIV-holders who worked closely with the U.S. military in Afghanistan. Beyond veterans who served in Afghanistan, military spouses and allies have also demonstrated their commitment to helping Afghans integrate in the U.S. This mentorship program is an opportunity for the veteran community to continue to give back to the country by helping Afghan families who have resettled in the U.S.

Since you will be exchanging information about mentors and mentees with Tent, please ensure that you are adhering to your company’s internal privacy and data safeguarding policies.

Steps for recruiting mentors at your company:

1. Develop and implement a strategy for recruiting mentors. Examples include:
- Emailing employees at your company with the support of HR or internal communications colleagues (see the [Appendix](#) for a sample email)

• Highlighting the initiative at company events

• Promoting the initiative through your veteran’s ERG

• Posting about the initiative in internal company channels, such as Slack or Microsoft Teams

-
2. Share a link to a survey provided by Tent to sign up mentors to the program (see the [implementation guide](#)⁴⁰ for more information).
 3. Check your company’s safeguarding policies, including whether mentors participating in this program will be required to undergo a criminal background check. Decide which background checks mentors will be required to undergo.
 4. Share this resource with mentors, so they have full visibility of all content related to the mentorship program.



Refer to the [implementation guide](#)⁴¹ for further details and feel free to reach out to Tent if you need additional guidance:
info@tent.org

02 Step two: The mentor-mentee matching process

Tent works with a network of NGOs, community organizations, and other groups that service refugees and are able to recruit prospective mentees.

Employees and refugees will be able to sign up as mentors and mentees at any time through an online tool created by Tent. The process is as follows:

1. Once a mentee signs up, Tent will match them to a suitable mentor.
2. If a suitable mentor is identified, the mentee will receive an automated email from Tent asking them to confirm their participation in the mentorship program.
3. After their mentee confirms their participation, the mentor will receive an automated email asking them to attend online training provided by Tent (throughout the program, mentors and mentees will have access to additional online resources).
4. Mentors will be asked to arrange the first session with their mentees after they complete their training.

See the [implementation guide](#)⁴² for the latest information about how mentor-mentee matching works, including a step-by-step process flow and details about who is responsible for doing what.



Feel free to reach out to Tent if you need additional guidance:
info@tent.org

03

Step three:

Prepare mentors for their role

All mentors who take part in the mentorship program are required to participate in a Tent training webinar to learn best practices for supporting their refugee mentees. But you should also provide mentors at your company with guidance on how best to prepare for their mentorship experience by sharing the [Background on Afghans in the U.S.](#) chapter of this guide with them in advance of their first mentee meeting. This will provide mentors with a chance to learn more about the challenges Afghan refugees face, as well as best practices for stepping into a mentoring role. Additionally, you should direct mentors to review the meeting resources included in the [Guide for mentors](#) chapter in advance, so they can anticipate what to expect as they take on the role.

You may also want to plan an informational meeting with all mentors, either in person at your company or online, to prepare them for the program. Be sure to reserve time for them to share their questions or concerns.

The agenda for this informational mentor session could include:

- Objectives of the mentorship program
- A summary of the steps involved
- Background information on mentees: where they come from, challenges they face, etc.
- A discussion about this mentorship program’s code of conduct (see the [Annex](#))

At this meeting, it may also be useful to provide best practices for building relationships across cultures. Mentors who may have mentored before or who have experience of working with Afghan refugees can give advice to the rest of the group.



Refer to the [implementation guide](#)⁴³ for further details and feel free to reach out to Tent if you need additional guidance:
info@tent.org

04

Step four:

Support mentors and mentees over the course of the program

Support for mentors

For the duration of the mentorship program, you are the mentors’ point of contact if questions or concerns arise. Mentees may wish to discuss issues that go beyond the knowledge and experience of the mentor – for example, reuniting with family, legal issues, etc. It is important to note that neither you nor your colleagues are professionally trained on refugees’ mental health challenges, legal statuses, or other such issues. In the initial meeting between a mentor and mentee, they can agree on the boundaries of their relationship, logistics (e.g., the best way to contact each other and at what hours), and come to an agreement on confidentiality.

Mentors and mentees should agree that they can maintain confidentiality unless they feel someone is at risk of harm, or others around them are at risk of harm. Should a mentor report a conversation with their mentee they feel is outside the scope of the mentorship program, or which is inappropriate or concerning, do not keep this information to yourself or attempt to manage a situation on your own. If a mentor raises such a concern, please raise it with Tent or the NGO that referred the mentee (if you know this information) as soon as possible. **Do not share sensitive information with anyone other than the NGO or Tent.**

Checking-in

Tent recommends that mentorship coordinators send a check-in email to mentors and mentees at the midpoint of their six months together, offering to meet if anyone has questions. During these check-ins, mentors and mentees can share and discuss their concerns and progress.

Your company’s sexual harassment and conduct policies should apply to mentor-mentee relationships

The mentoring experience is professional in nature, and this should be reflected in the conduct of both mentors and mentees. For the duration of the mentorship program, sexual and romantic relationships between mentors and mentees is prohibited, as are lewd and sexually suggestive comments. A mentor who abuses their status as a trusted figure to engage in a romantic or sexual

relationship with their mentee constitutes sexual misconduct. No participant in the mentorship program should ever be made to feel intimidated, coerced, unsafe, or undignified based on interactions in person or online. A violation of these principles constitutes harassment.

If a mentor feels uncomfortable with their mentee’s behavior, mentors should raise the issue with you, the mentorship coordinator. Support them as they reflect on the mentee’s behavior and why it feels challenging to them. At the same time, if a mentee feels uncomfortable with their mentor’s behavior, they should contact the NGO that referred them to the mentorship program.

Rematching

In general, Tent advises against rematching mentor and mentee pairs, as the aim is to allow them to develop a strong relationship over the duration of the program. However, if a mentee is uncontactable, or if there is a concern about them, please raise this with Tent, which will do its best to assign another mentee.



For information about what to do if a mentee is uncontactable or unresponsive, see the [implementation guide](#).⁴⁴
Feel free to reach out to Tent if you need additional guidance:
info@tent.org

05 Step five: Measure success with a post-program survey

At the end of the mentorship program, Tent will distribute program evaluation surveys to both mentors and mentees so they can report back on their experience. These surveys are a great way to measure impact, and unearth best practices and lessons learned, so that Tent can strengthen the mentorship program year after year. Tent will share the results of these surveys with companies.

Tent will also provide certificates to mentors and mentees at the end of the program to recognise their efforts.



Refer to the [implementation guide](#)⁴⁵ for further details and feel free to reach out to Tent if you need additional guidance:
info@tent.org

Ensuring the long-term success of the mentorship program

This mentorship program was designed by Tent to continue on a rolling basis (see the [implementation guide](#)⁴⁶ for more information).

If you are leaving the company or need to step back from your mentorship coordinator responsibilities after the first iteration of the program, it is your responsibility to find a new mentorship coordinator within your veteran’s ERG to carry on running the program. Make sure to hand over all essential relationships and resources to the new mentorship coordinator. Mentors should be encouraged to renew their participation in the program if they have had a positive experience.

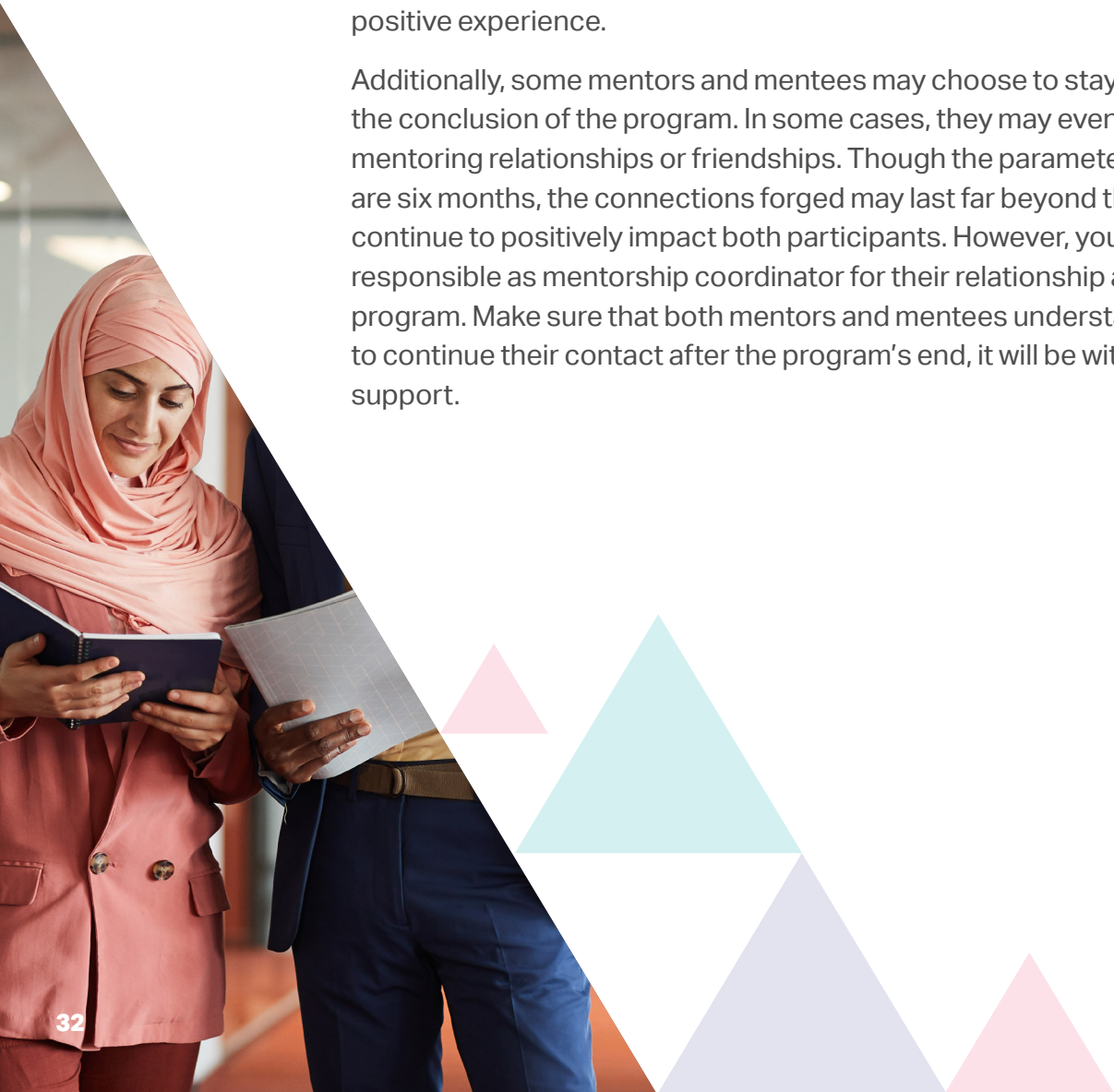
Additionally, some mentors and mentees may choose to stay in touch after the conclusion of the program. In some cases, they may even form long-term mentoring relationships or friendships. Though the parameters of this program are six months, the connections forged may last far beyond the program and continue to positively impact both participants. However, you are no longer responsible as mentorship coordinator for their relationship after the end of the program. Make sure that both mentors and mentees understand that if they wish to continue their contact after the program’s end, it will be without any official support.

Recap: Program checklist for mentorship coordinators

- Develop and implement a strategy for recruiting mentors
- Share a link to a survey provided by Tent to sign up mentors to the program
- The mentor-mentee matching process:
 - Once a mentee signs up, Tent will match them to a suitable mentor
 - If a suitable mentor is identified, the mentee will receive an automated email from Tent asking them to confirm their participation in the mentorship program
 - After their mentee confirms their participation, the mentor will receive an automated email asking them to attend online training provided by Tent (throughout the program, mentors and mentees will have access to additional online resources)
 - Mentors will be asked to arrange the first session with their mentees after they complete their training
- Prepare mentors for their role by sharing the relevant content and resources, and by planning an informational meeting
- Offer at least one mid-program check-in meeting for mentors and mentees in case they need to raise any concerns
- Tent distributes post-program surveys to mentors and mentees
- Tent provides certificates to mentors and mentees
- If you do not plan to reprise your role as mentorship coordinator, find a new mentorship coordinator from within your veteran’s ERG and hand over any key relationships and resources



Refer to the [implementation guide](#)⁴⁷ for further details and feel free to reach out to Tent if you need additional guidance:
info@tent.org



Guide for mentors

This guide contains information and advice that will equip you to serve as a mentor in your company’s mentorship program for Afghan refugees. Participating in this program is an opportunity for you to strengthen your inclusive leadership skills, cross-cultural competencies, and communication abilities, and make a difference in an Afghan refugee’s life. You can also learn from the experiences of professionals from another country.

For your mentee, this mentorship program is an opportunity to broaden their own social and professional networks, exchange experiences, and receive guidance from you as a trusted resource as they navigate their career path and the U.S. job market.



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The mentorship program

Program overview

You will be matched with an Afghan refugee who will be your mentee for the duration of the mentorship program. As a mentor, you will be expected to:

- Meet with your mentee at least six times within a six-month period, either in person or online, to work together on professional development topics including:
 - Career goals and self-assessment
 - How to find a job in the U.S.
 - Resumes, cover letters, and LinkedIn
 - The interview process
 - Networking
 - Key learnings and next steps in your mentee’s job search
- Discuss and reflect on differences in workplace cultural norms with your mentee
- Exchange professional experiences with your mentee and expand their professional network by making introductions between them and your contacts
- Provide feedback during a mid-program check-in meeting and the end-of-program survey

The role of the mentorship coordinator

The mentorship program at your company will be managed by one of your colleagues who is designated to serve as mentorship coordinator. This person is responsible for managing all administrative aspects of the program, including the post-program review process.

In addition, the mentorship coordinator will be your primary point of contact should any questions or challenges arise over the course of the program.

The matching process

To begin your role as a mentor, you will need to fill out a survey about your professional and personal background. You can also share your expectations as a mentor (e.g., what you expect from the program, how often you would like to be in touch with your mentee, etc.). Tent will match you with a mentee and confirm the details of this via email. Before you can connect with your mentee, you must complete online training provided by Tent (information about this will be included in Tent’s email to you).

Mentor-mentee meetings

You will be expected to meet with your mentee at least six times over a six-month period. You should send a personal note to your mentee in advance of each of these meetings via email and/or text message to express your enthusiasm about working together and to confirm their attendance. If you or your mentee cannot make it to one of the meetings, suggest an alternative time to meet. Mentors are expected to take the lead on scheduling.

As this mentorship program is focused on professional development, you will be expected to cover a range of relevant topics with your mentee throughout. The final section of this chapter includes suggested topics/content for mentor-mentee meetings, as well as suggested exercises to work through together during them.

You should also consider reaching out to your mentee at other times of the year that are relevant to the Afghan community. This can help to build rapport and develop your relationship. Some occasions where this may be appropriate include Nowruz (New Year’s Day holiday) and, if your mentee is a practicing Muslim, major Muslim holidays such as Eid-al-Fitr and Eid-al-Adha. It is also important to be sensitive to the month of Ramadan, when many practicing Muslims fast from sunup to sundown. The dates for Ramadan change every year, as the holiday is based on the Islamic calendar.

Advocating for your mentee

When appropriate, your efforts to advocate for your mentee can go a long way. Your support can make a big difference if they are looking to make a professional connection, attend a workplace networking event, or have their resume sent to the right people. In your capacity as a mentor, you can greatly assist your mentee by making introductions between them and your professional contacts.

Post-program feedback

At the end of the program, you will be asked by Tent to complete a survey about your experiences. In these feedback forms, consider the value of the mentorship program, comparing it to the goals set at the beginning. What were your goals as a mentor, and to what extent have you been able to achieve these? What went well, and what could be improved in the future? You will also be asked to reflect on interactions with and learnings from working with your mentee. Your mentee will also be asked to complete a similar post-program survey.



How to be an effective mentor

Understanding your role as a mentor: a two-way relationship

As a mentor, you have a unique opportunity to help your mentee set their career goals and develop a plan to achieve these. You will also have the chance to help them build confidence in their professional abilities while adapting to a new country. This is especially valuable to Afghan refugees, many of whom have arrived in the U.S. for the first time and without their families and a robust professional network. Mentoring an Afghan refugee can assist not only the individual, but their entire family.

However, this experience is not solely about advising your mentee. You will also learn from them and develop cross-cultural competencies, and learn about their journey and aspirations as new Americans. Individuals who mentor others can foster a greater sense of self-confidence and self-awareness as they develop their leadership skills.

As you step into your role as a mentor, Tent recommends focusing on providing your mentee with guidance rather than solutions. Remember that you are not a case manager or decision-maker. Your role is to provide ideas, tools, and skills that can bolster your mentee's long-term success. You can also point your mentee in the direction of specific resources or people who might be able to help them build skills outside of your area of expertise.

It is also important to foster trust between you and your mentee. Afghan mentees, especially those who have recently arrived in the U.S., may experience feelings of intimidation and/or unfamiliarity when interacting with you as a mentor for the first time. Showing that you have a genuine interest in getting to know your mentee as a person, while being careful not to ask probing questions that may trigger trauma, can help them to feel comfortable and create a bond between you. It can also be helpful to share some of your own personal and/or professional story, as you feel comfortable, to foster a two-way relationship and build a strong foundation for the mentorship journey.

Being aware of potential cultural sensitivities

Working with Afghan refugees requires paying attention to sensitive cultural issues. Your role is not to act as a social worker or psychologist. You must

respect important boundaries. Do not ask probing questions about your mentee's life in Afghanistan and/or how and why they fled the country, as this may require them to relive traumas. It is appropriate to ask about your mentee's professional experiences before and after arriving in the U.S., but it is not appropriate to ask questions about the political situation in Afghanistan, or any specifics that led your mentee to leave Afghanistan. Your mentee may voluntarily share this kind of personal information. If this happens, you are welcome to engage in the conversation if you both feel comfortable doing so.

Afghan refugees may have different norms and understanding about gender norms and cultural expectations. Do not make assumptions about your mentee based on their appearance, dress, or country of origin. Recognize that all individuals are individuals and also belong to various cultural groups, so while it is important to understand Afghan culture, it is also just as important to recognize that all Afghans are unique individuals and will bring their own opinions and lived experiences. With this caveat, there are certain things in Afghan culture that will be important to understand. Some Afghan women, for example, choose to wear head coverings (i.e., a hijab). In addition, many Afghans are practicing Muslims and observe the tenet of prayer five times a day. Many Afghan Muslims do not consume alcohol and pork products, as well as avoiding meat that is not "halal", which is a way of preparing food according to Islamic dietary guidelines. You can ask your mentee if they have any dietary restrictions.

In addition, gender norms between Afghanistan and the U.S. are different. In the U.S., it is common for people of all genders to shake hands, hug, or kiss cheeks upon greeting. In Afghanistan, it is more common for people of the opposite gender not to touch unless they are very close family or friends. If you are a man mentoring a woman (or vice versa), it is polite to wait until a woman extends her hand before extending your own. While this may feel strange, it is respectful. The man can instead place his hand over his heart during the greeting. In the U.S., it is also common and respectful to maintain eye contact with people with whom you are speaking. In Afghanistan, eye contact is often kept to a minimum out of respect. If your mentee is not making much eye contact, know that they are not trying to act disrespectfully. The meeting during which you and your mentee

discuss the interview process (see [Meeting four](#) below) can be a good time to explore this topic and explain how Americans view maintaining eye contact as respectful.

At the start of your time with your mentee, ask how they would like to be addressed and if there are any particular considerations you should know about.

It is important to honor your mentee’s identity as an individual and professional. Keep in mind that there may be considerable cultural, political, and philosophical differences between the two of you. Tent advises that mentors refrain from engaging with mentees on politics and other sensitive topics.

It is also important to respect and appreciate your mentee’s unique career goals. Be conscious of the fact that Afghan refugees often need immediate opportunities to make a living when they are resettled. If they are not fluent in English, or if their credentials are not recognized locally, your mentee may need to work in lower-paying or lower-skilled jobs before they prepare themselves to find work in their field(s) of interest or expertise. Some Afghan refugees may be content with remaining in lower-paying or lower-skilled roles longer-term, while for others, these kinds of roles may be necessary to make a living, as well as providing a stepping stone to jobs in their field(s) of interest.

Finally, note that many refugees leave successful, stable careers in their countries of origin and have to readjust their career expectations upon resettling. This can often be the case for Afghan SIV-holders. If this is the case with your mentee, be sensitive to their desire to continue in their field(s) of expertise, even if they are working a lower-skilled job in the interim. Consider how you can support your mentee as they work towards re-establishing themselves in their chosen field(s).

In addition to being aware of cultural sensitivities for Afghan mentees, it is important for veteran mentors to be aware of how their participation in the program may affect themselves. Working closely with an Afghan refugee may remind you of your time in the military, and conversations might spark both positive and challenging memories. Caring for your own mental health is important. The Hiring Our Heroes [website](#)⁴⁸ provides wellness resources, and PsychArmor⁵¹ offers several mental health courses for veterans.

Managing expectations

Be clear with your mentee about what they can expect from your relationship and ask them about their expectations from the program. Your role is to work with your mentee to make them a stronger candidate for employment, but you cannot guarantee that your support will result in them landing a job by the end of the program. Emphasize this to your mentee upfront to avoid disappointment or misunderstanding down the line. It may also be important to manage expectations about the types of job your mentee may secure. Remind your mentee that they may not find their dream job right away, but add that each job is a stepping stone towards their career goals.

Things your mentee can expect of you include:

- Discussing their career goals (or lack thereof), current work situation, and any obstacles they face in finding, securing, and maintaining work in the U.S.
- Working together to sharpen their job acquisition skills and advance their understanding of how to find skilled jobs in the U.S.
- Explaining resume, cover letter, and LinkedIn fundamentals, and offering your feedback on their resume, cover letter, and LinkedIn profile
- Discussing how to navigate corporate workplaces in the U.S.
- Discussing networking and potentially connecting your mentee with relevant contacts in your professional network
- Unpacking the social and cultural norms of workplaces in the U.S.
- Advocating for your mentee when you come across opportunities for them to keep building their professional network
- Helping your mentee to seek out job opportunities

You should be honest about what you can bring to the mentorship experience from the start. Consider how much time you are willing to commit to proofreading resumes, cover letters, and job applications or doing other

activities to support your mentee outside of your scheduled meetings. If you are not sure, or if you and your mentee find it difficult to discuss these issues alone, contact the mentorship coordinator for advice.

For the duration of the mentorship program, you are your mentee’s point of contact if questions or concerns arise. Mentees may wish to discuss issues that go beyond your knowledge and experience. Examples might include legal issues, concerns around work, and reuniting with family members. It is important to note that neither you nor your colleagues are professionally trained on refugees’ mental health challenges, legal statuses, or other such issues. Should you have a conversation with your mentee that you feel is outside the scope of the mentorship program, or which is inappropriate or concerning, do not keep the information to yourself or attempt to manage a situation on your own. Report it to the mentorship coordinator immediately. **Do not share sensitive information with anyone other than the mentorship coordinator.**

Model appropriate behavior and conduct

An important aspect of this mentoring relationship is maintaining trustworthiness and respecting your mentee’s confidentiality. It is imperative that you honor their trust to the greatest extent possible.

Your company’s sexual harassment conduct and policies should apply to mentor-mentee relationships. This mentoring experience is professional in nature and should reflect that in the conduct of both parties. Tent expects that, for the duration of the mentoring relationship, sexual and romantic relationships between mentors and mentees are prohibited, as are lewd and sexually suggestive comments. If you abuse your status as a trusted figure to engage in a romantic or sexual relationship with your mentee, this constitutes sexual misconduct. No participant in the mentorship program should ever be made to feel intimidated, coerced, unsafe, or undignified based on interactions in person or online. A violation of these principles constitutes harassment.

If you feel uncomfortable with your mentee’s behavior, you should raise the issue with the mentorship coordinator. At the same time, if a mentee feels uncomfortable with their mentor’s behavior, they should contact the mentorship

coordinator. Sexual harassment is only one aspect of this mentorship program’s code of conduct (see the **Annex**).

Supporting your mentee post-program

At the end of the mentorship program, you will no longer have a formal commitment to your mentee as a mentor. Additionally, once the program is complete, the mentorship coordinator is no longer responsible for supporting your relationship with your mentee.

However, you and your mentee may wish to stay in touch after the conclusion of the program. Keep in mind that sensitivities around inappropriate topics are still crucial even if you are not part of a formal mentoring program.

Your mentee may ask you to continue to make connections with people in your network or to continue meeting with them to brainstorm ideas and get your advice. Just as setting clear expectations is important at the start of a mentoring relationship, it is also important to set expectations after the mentorship program ends. Tent encourages you to clarify how involved and available you want to be for your mentee moving forward.

Your mentee will also be encouraged to establish clear expectations with you about how involved they would like to be after the mentorship program ends.

Mentor-mentee meeting resources

As a mentor, your primary objective throughout this mentorship program is to support your mentee in their career and professional development. With this goal in mind, Tent has identified a series of relevant topics for you to discuss with your mentee at each of your meetings:

- 01 Career goals and self-assessment*
- 02 How to find a job in the U.S.
- 03 Resumes, cover letters, and LinkedIn
- 04 The interview process
- 05 Networking
- 06 Recap and next steps

Below you will find meeting pre-reads, along with suggested exercises for you to work through with your mentee at each meeting.

** Resources for this first meeting also include tips for setting expectations with your mentee regarding the mentorship program and your relationship. Even if you choose to cover a topic other than career goals during your first meeting, you should still plan to set expectations with your mentee to lay the groundwork for a successful time together.*

01

Meeting one: Career goals and self-assessment

Purpose of meeting

- ▲ Get to know each other
- ▲ Establish goals and expectations for mentorship
- ▲ Develop concrete steps for building a career in the U.S.
- ▲ Agree on next steps

Exercises

1. Get to know each other

- Use the following conversation starters to share some of your own experiences and background. Tell your mentee:
 - About your own professional and educational history, and future career goals
 - The reason you joined this program as a mentor
 - About your experiences as a veteran in the workplace, if you are one and feel comfortable doing so
- Your mentee may be hesitant to open up immediately, so asking surface-level questions is a good place to start as an icebreaker. It is important for your mentee to feel like you care about getting to know them as a person. You can show a genuine interest in your mentee while also being careful not to ask probing questions that may trigger trauma

2. Establish goals and expectations for mentorship

- Does your mentee currently have a job? If so, where does your mentee currently work? If not, ask about any obstacles they face in finding, securing, and maintaining work in U.S. (see the [Background on Afghans in the U.S.](#) chapter for more information about the employment barriers Afghan refugees face)

- Does your mentee have prior professional experience – for example, previous jobs, internships, and/or work experience?
- Does your mentee have specific career aspirations – for example, an interest in a certain industry or professional skill set?*

** If your mentee does not have a specific professional goal in mind, you can guide them by asking questions such as:*

- *What does work mean to you?*
- *What do you value the most from work?*
- *What motivates you to work?*
- *What would you like to do for a job?*

- What is your mentee’s motivation to enter a specific field(s)?
- Ask about their long-term career aspirations: what steps do they think they need to take to find a job that matches this vision?
- Discuss educational opportunities: is your mentee interested in going to university or securing a high school equivalency degree, taking a language course, or vocational training?
- Agree on goals for the mentorship program and come up with a “wishlist” of things you both want to accomplish (share this during the next meeting)
- Confirm that your mentee understands that you will be supporting their professional development over the coming months, but also that you cannot guarantee being able to help them find and secure a job within the time frame

- Share this mentorship program’s code of conduct (see the [Annex](#)) with your mentee and discuss it. In particular, chat about the best method of communication for both of you, the best time of day to meet, and whether in-person or online meetings are best. Be mindful of how much extra these options may cost your mentee. If possible, call your mentee to save their mobile data or ask your company to pay for their transport costs if you meet in person

NEXT STEPS

1. Discuss ways that you can be supportive in the coming weeks and consider setting deadlines for any next steps.
2. Establish expectations for following-up and any other communication between meetings. Be clear on boundaries around when and how you will communicate with your mentee.
3. Briefly go over the meeting plans recommended in this guide. Although there are only six meeting plans, tell your mentee that you can break up the content as needed depending on their desired pace. If you go through all of the recommended meeting plans before the six required sessions have been completed, ask your mentee what they would like to work on for the remaining sessions.
4. Let your mentee know that the next meeting will cover how to prepare for and find a job in the U.S.

02

Meeting two: How to find a job in the U.S.

Purpose of meeting

This meeting focuses on the process of finding a job in the U.S., which is very different to that in Afghanistan. This meeting is an opportunity to discuss the job search process and answer any questions that arise.

Here are some suggested agenda items for this meeting:

- ▲ Discuss the job search process and timeline in the U.S.
- ▲ Discuss how to search for jobs online
- ▲ Practice searching for jobs

Exercises

1. Discuss the job search process and timeline in the U.S.

- Explain to your mentee that many jobs in the U.S. are posted online on job boards or networking websites. Discuss and perhaps even show examples of some common websites – for example, Indeed, LinkedIn, Google For Jobs, CareerBuilder, ZipRecruiter, Glassdoor, and Monster. Have an open discussion about the job search process in Afghanistan versus the U.S.: what are the similarities and differences?
- Go over what is involved when applying for a job online. Many websites post job descriptions and then invite individuals to submit an online application. This application process will differ depending on the website and job, but it typically includes the following:
 - Submitting demographic information about the applicant (e.g., name, home address, phone number, email address)
 - Listing information about work experiences and education. It is important to have on hand information such as a start and end date for each employment and education experience, a supervisor name, as well as a few brief sentences about what was done at each job

- Questions about the applicant, including their race/ethnicity, veteran status, disability status, and if they are authorized to work in the U.S.
- Submitting references, which includes the names, titles, email addresses, and phone numbers of individuals whom the applicant has worked with previously, and who can share more detail about the applicant’s experiences and skills. Note that it is important to list individuals whom an employer can easily reach (ideally in the U.S.) and not family members. It is also important to note that your mentee may ask for you to act as a reference for them
- Explain that when applying for jobs, it is important to customize a resume and cover letter to the job description. Many companies use screening tools to filter out resumes due to large numbers of applicants, so it is important that materials speak closely to the job posting. This could mean editing certain words on a resume or making sure that a cover letter names the hiring company
- Discuss what happens after someone applies for a job. Many job postings will ask applicants not to contact the company. It is better for applicants to keep a close eye on their email and voicemail, as they will be contacted only if the company wants to schedule an interview
- Explain that while many people find jobs online, others may find jobs through networking (an upcoming meeting will cover this in more detail)

2. Discuss how to search for jobs online

- Go over best practices for searching for a job online – for example, using search terms effectively, trying different keywords, and updating location preferences. Some job search websites allow users to select additional filters, such as required education level or income preferences. This can also help to filter jobs

-
- Explain that many websites allow users to set up email alerts for specific job searches, keywords, and sometimes specific employers
 - Share examples of websites that list job opportunities at companies, such as Indeed, LinkedIn and Glassdoor, and explain how to find open jobs on a company's website

3. Practice searching for jobs

- Now that you and your mentee have discussed the basics of how to search for a job in the U.S., it is time to practice using job search websites. Work together to search for some jobs that your mentee is interested in based on your prior conversation about career goals

NEXT STEPS

1. Ask your mentee to spend some more time practicing searching for a job using common job search websites – you can troubleshoot any issues they have at your next meeting.
2. Let your mentee know that the next meeting will cover an overview of resumes and cover letters. Ask your mentee to send you their resume and a sample cover letter for you to review together during the next meeting. If your mentee does not have these documents drafted, let them know that you will draft these together during the meeting.



03

Meeting three: Resumes, cover letters, and LinkedIn

Purpose of meeting

This meeting focuses on resumes, cover letters, and LinkedIn. If your mentee is familiar with these and already has them prepared for review, it may take only one meeting to review the documents and discuss. If your mentee has not drafted these documents, Tent recommends splitting this topic into two different meetings to make sure that there is enough time to discuss drafting and reviewing them together.

Here are some suggested agenda items for this meeting:

- ▲ Discuss the purpose and function of resumes, cover letters, and LinkedIn
- ▲ Review and edit your mentee’s resume, cover letter, and LinkedIn profile, and explain how to tailor these materials for the U.S. job market

Consider bringing printed copies of your own resume and a cover letter to share with your mentee as an example of how these documents are prepared in the context of your work. Have an open discussion about resumes and cover letters in the U.S. and Afghanistan. Aim to understand: are resumes and cover letters used in Afghanistan? What information should be included and why?

If your meeting will be held online instead of in person, make sure that you exchange all of the above documents with your mentee in advance. You can also share the screen with your mentee to look at the same documents together during the meeting.

Exercises

1. Discuss the purpose and function of resumes, cover letters, and LinkedIn

- Share how resumes factor into the job search process and the specific nuances of resumes in the U.S. job market, including what elements of a resume are most important (e.g., content, design, etc.)
- Review how resumes can be uploaded to recruitment websites
- Discuss the purpose of cover letters. Share with your mentee how to properly format cover letters in the U.S.
- If they are not already familiar with it, introduce your mentee to LinkedIn. Explain the similarities and differences between a resume and LinkedIn. You can also show them your LinkedIn profile and explain how it works. Discuss which elements of a LinkedIn profile will make a strong impression with recruiters and industry contacts, and why. Consider sharing your personal experiences, positive and negative

Note that your mentee might not be comfortable setting up a public LinkedIn profile due to safety and security concerns. Approach this topic sensitively and explain the different privacy options available to them. Respect your mentee if they choose not to create a LinkedIn profile.

- Discuss what elements of a resume, cover letter, and LinkedIn profile will make a strong impression with recruiters and why. Consider sharing your personal experiences, positive and negative, and ask for theirs
- Explain that while having a strong resume and cover letter is essential, interviewing, communication, and networking skills (which you will cover in upcoming meetings) are also critical to landing a job
- If you have time, touch on email and LinkedIn message etiquette as it pertains to the job application and business networking processes

2. Edit your mentee’s resume together

- Review your mentee’s resume together and discuss potential edits as you go. Talk through the changes you are suggesting so that your mentee can understand why you are making them, without taking over the entire process. Your mentee is in charge of their own resume
- Talk through resume format and length. Discuss the importance of being concise while still accurately reflecting previous experiences and skills
- Be sure to explain which resume components are critical in the U.S. and your field(s) of expertise, especially with regards to education and work experience
- If your mentee’s refugee status is not currently uncertain (e.g., if it is not pending or expiring), and they are comfortable with it, it may be helpful to find somewhere on the resume to explicitly note that they are authorized to work in the U.S. – for example, adding “Authorized to work in the U.S.” at the end of the summary section
- If your mentee is comfortable with it, discuss how you can reflect any breaks in their resume, whether it was for breaks between contract work or other reasons, such as their refugee journey
- Before you finish this exercise, make sure that your mentee is comfortable implementing the suggested changes while giving them space not to implement the suggested changes with which they disagree

3. Review your mentee’s cover letter together

- Discuss with your mentee how cover letters are used in the U.S. Ask them if they have written a cover letter before and if/how they are used in Afghanistan. Share your experiences of how you have used cover letters in the past. Discuss how cover letters could highlight your mentee’s skills and experiences to make them a stronger candidate for a job
- Discuss best practices for cover letter writing in the U.S. and, if you have the relevant expertise, in your mentee’s field(s) of interest. If your mentee is an SIV, it also may be helpful to note their work experience with the U.S. military. Without taking over the process, ask your mentee if they would like to draft a sample cover letter and offer to review it with them. It may be helpful to think of this cover letter as a template, which your mentee can customize for different job applications
- Review your mentee’s cover letter together. Provide feedback and explain why you are recommending each change. Listen carefully to your mentee’s thoughts and ideas. Ask them why they think it is good, why they wrote it this way, etc. Focus only on feedback that would be transferable to future cover letters
- Before you finish this exercise, make sure that your mentee is comfortable implementing your feedback independently

4. Create and/or improve your mentee’s LinkedIn page

- Explain how your mentee can create a LinkedIn profile or improve their existing one. Here are some recommendations you can share with your mentee:
 - Choose an appropriate profile picture
 - Add a background photo
 - Use the headline to describe their career objectives

- Write a concise and compelling summary of what they used to do and would like to do
- Add their previous work and volunteering experience, as well as educational background, with a description for each
- List relevant skills (including language skills)
- Follow the LinkedIn pages of some companies and organizations that are of interest to your mentee

NEXT STEPS

1. You may want to ask your mentee to revise their resume, cover letter, and LinkedIn profile based on the feedback you shared during the meeting. Taking into account what their priorities are, you may agree on a timeline for these revisions and ask them to send these updated versions to you so that you can share any additional feedback.
2. If you covered email etiquette in this session, consider sending practice emails that exemplify the expected email communication style.
3. If you are willing, offer to proofread application materials for jobs or educational programs for which the mentee is applying (this offer can be extended at any point throughout the program).

04

Meeting four: The interview process

Purpose of meeting

- ▲ Discuss the fundamentals of job interviews
- ▲ Conduct a mock interview
- ▲ Discuss following-up on an interview

Exercises

1. Discuss the fundamentals of job interviews

- Discuss the importance of interviews to the job search process. Interviews are a way for a company to judge if candidates are a good fit for the company and position. It is important to practice for interviews, as the ability to interview well is crucial to finding a job
- Have a conversation about how to talk about one’s experience and strengths during an interview. Afghan culture places emphasis on humility and not talking too much about one’s strengths and accomplishments, and during interviews, applicants have to “sell” themselves. This might be a new cultural experience for your mentee. It can be helpful to share your own response to a common interview question such as “tell me about yourself” to demonstrate how to confidently state your experience, education, and expertise
- Suggest helpful best practices for interviews. Share insights about how to answer questions in ways that highlight your mentee’s strengths, skills, and experiences, and how to avoid common interview faux pas. Discuss strategies for performing well in interviews in the U.S., which may be different from Afghanistan. This exercise can also be an opportunity to learn about working across cultures
- Exchange basic expectations around concepts such as punctuality, personal appearance, reliability, and good communication. Understanding

the norms and expectations of the U.S. can dramatically improve your mentee’s preparedness for an interview. For example: should you or should you not ask questions during an interview? If yes, what kind of questions?

- Discuss the role of “small talk”. Interviewers often start an interview with small talk to build a connection with interviewees before the interview, or to see how the applicant engages with new people. This can differ from country to country
- Discuss the importance of researching the company prior to the interview. It is important to know basic information about the company. It can also be smart to prepare a few questions about the company that can be asked during the interview
- Create a list of standard questions interviewees can ask at the end of the interview. Explain that it is common for interviews to end with asking the applicant what questions they have for the company, and that it is important to ask questions as it demonstrates interest in the company and position
- Have an open dialogue about proper dress code for interviews in your mentee’s field(s) of interest. Every sector has different expectations for dress code based on social norms and rules. For example, jeans and trainers may not be appropriate for a job interview in some fields. Discuss with your mentee what the proper dress code is for a business setting while leaving room for personal interpretation from their side. You can suggest local charity shops or other shops in the area that sell affordable business wear if cost is a concern. You should not discourage any religious garments
- Discuss common challenges refugees face in an interview setting – how can your mentee best highlight their specific experiences and qualifications?
- Identify best practices for approaching a virtual interview, whether on the phone or via online meeting platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams

- Discuss how to evaluate potential employers, including their commitment to refugee- and/or Muslim-inclusive policies and workplaces. Asking other refugees and Muslims about their employment experiences and/or specific companies as part of the networking process (which you will cover in your next meeting) is a good place to start

2. Conduct a mock interview

- Spend most of your meeting together practicing interview skills. Tell your mentee that this is a safe way for them to practice what it is like to interview for a job and let them know that you will offer feedback on how to improve their interviewing skills

For a list of questions to use in your practice interview, Tent recommends using CareerOneStop’s [list of common interview questions](#).⁵⁰

- Make sure that you tailor your questions and feedback to your mentee’s field(s) of interest
- Recommend that your mentee prepares for both in-person and online interviews. For online interviews, it is important to check technology prior to the interview to ensure that everything is working properly
- Suggest that your mentee engages in informational interviews with individuals working in their field(s) of interest. Informational interviews can help your mentee to learn more about what it is like to work in a specific industry or role, and can also help them to expand their professional network

3. Discuss following-up on an interview

- Talk about the etiquette in the U.S. when following-up after speculative interviews and job interviews, including writing a “thank you email”

- Discuss cultural norms regarding hearing back from a potential employer after an interview. Share that most companies only send an email to confirm receipt of an application and do not make further contact unless it is to schedule an interview. How long should your mentee expect to wait before hearing back from a company after an interview? What should they do if they have not heard back after a few weeks?

NEXT STEPS

1. Your mentee may be interested in beginning to set up and conduct informational interviews. If so, arrange one (online, in person, or by phone) between your mentee and one of your contacts working in their field(s) of interest.
2. If relevant, offer to help your mentee prepare for upcoming interviews (this offer can be extended at any point throughout the program).

05

Meeting five: Networking

Purpose of meeting

- ▲ Create a networking strategy with your mentee
- ▲ Conduct a mock networking session
- ▲ Discuss the experience of networking as someone from Afghanistan

Exercises

1. Create a networking strategy with your mentee

- Get a sense of your mentee’s professional and personal networks and discuss how they can best be utilized to advance their job search
- Talk about the type of networking that is common in the U.S. (e.g., LinkedIn, email, events, etc.)
- Highlight different ways of networking and help your mentee to explore them:
 - Find someone working in your mentee’s field(s) of interest through your network. Coach your mentee on asking for a 30-minute informational call, during which they will ask about the person’s job and express an interest in being kept in mind for future job opportunities
 - Visit a company’s website in which your mentee is interested, find an email address for a contact person at the company, and do the same as above
 - Find job or networking events organized by companies or organizations
- Discuss cultural norms around networking, including reviewing the type of questions that would be helpful to ask, as well as the role of small talk. Networking is hard for many people, and it can be even more challenging for Afghans who are still learning about and adjusting to American culture. Share some ideas about how your mentee can grow more comfortable, such

as engaging in small talk with Americans when possible and creating an “elevator pitch” about themselves

2. Conduct a mock networking session

- Pretend that you are having a casual conversation at a networking event or via video call. Have your mentee practice asking questions to learn about your work and find opportunities to share more about their professional background and interests
- Debrief on the mock networking session. Share feedback with your mentee and give them an opportunity to voice what felt comfortable or uncomfortable

3. Discuss the experience of networking as someone from Afghanistan

- If applicable, share best practices for networking as an immigrant, as well as your own experiences
- Identify networking approaches that can be helpful for your refugee mentee
- Discuss how your mentee should approach responding to questions or comments people may have about Afghanistan. Remind your mentee that many Americans do not have a thorough understanding of Afghanistan or Afghan culture
- Discuss how to utilize the Muslim and Afghan communities for networking purposes. Joining certain professional associations can be a great way to build both social and professional connections
- If your mentee is an SIV, discuss how to utilize any local veteran groups for networking purposes. While not all veteran groups include SIVs, some may be open to networking. Groups that may be more welcoming of SIVs include No One Left Behind,⁵¹ AfghanEvac,⁵² the American Legion,⁵³ Veterans of

Foreign Wars,⁵⁴ Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America,⁵⁵ and Student Veterans of America⁵⁶

NEXT STEPS

1. Ask your mentee to think about whom they might want to connect with for a networking session. Start with a short list of people in sectors and roles in which they are interested. In the next session, you can help your mentee to practice their networking skills with this specific framing in mind.
2. Let your mentee know that the next session will be your final formal meeting together. Ask if they would like to revisit any particular exercises from previous meetings. If they do, plan to cover these during the meeting.

06

Meeting six: Recap and next steps

Purpose of meeting

After you and your mentee have covered the fundamentals, you can use this last session to prepare your mentee for any upcoming networking sessions. This meeting is a good opportunity to revisit any specific exercises from previous sessions to which your mentee would like to come back. It can also be used to deliver a meeting (or several) that you were unable to get to due to time constraints.

Tent also recommends using this meeting to provide a top-line summary of what you and your mentee have discussed during your time together, as well as any key learnings.

At the end of the mentorship program, you will no longer have a formal commitment to your mentee as a mentor. However, you and your mentee may wish to stay in touch after the conclusion of the program. Just as setting clear expectations is important at the start of a mentoring relationship, it is also important to set expectations after the mentorship program ends. Tent encourages you to clarify how involved and available you want to be for your mentee moving forward.

Exercises

1. Prepare your mentee for any upcoming networking sessions

- If you have professional contacts you would like to introduce to your mentee, first ask your contact if they would be interested and comfortable with you making an introduction. Explain that your mentee is finishing a mentorship program and what their goals are. If the professional contact is comfortable with this connection, proceed by making the introduction

- Have a chat with your mentee about the professional contact and manage expectations. Explain that this introduction may not guarantee a job, but that the connection may be able to offer industry, company, or job insights, and/or provide additional introductions so that your mentee can expand their own network
- Help set up a meeting between your professional contact and your mentee. You can help your mentee to prepare some questions and talking points for their meeting

2. Discuss expectations about your relationship after the mentorship program ends

- Discuss the nature of your relationship moving forward. Consider what you may or may not be able to offer (and obtain) in this relationship in the future:
 - Can your mentee contact you to give them a reference?
 - Are you available to proofread resumes or cover letters?
 - Would you like to have a coffee with them in a few months' time?
 - Are there people with whom you might be able to connect your mentee?
 - Do you know of any upcoming networking events where they can practice their networking skills?

3. Recap and conclude your time together

- Do a recap of everything that has been covered throughout the year
- Ask your mentee what their greatest accomplishment has been during the mentorship program, what they found challenging, and what they would like to continue working on after the program ends
- Provide overall feedback to your mentee and ask for theirs

NEXT STEPS

- 1. Let your mentee know that they will receive a post-program survey from Tent and encourage them to fill it out.
- 2. Send your mentee a “thank you” note for working with you during the mentorship program (a card is appropriate). Consider focusing on your mentee’s professional growth during the program, highlighting some specific achievements, and offering words of encouragement for the future.



Appendix

Sample email to be sent to prospective mentors

To be sent by the mentorship coordinator (see the [implementation guide](#)⁵⁷ for more information):

Dear all,

I am writing to share an exciting opportunity: we have established a professional mentorship program for Afghan refugees in our community, in partnership with the Tent Partnership for Refugees, and I would love for you to be involved.

We are now recruiting employees at [Company name] to serve as mentors for this program. I will serve as mentorship coordinator, planning logistics for the program.

Mentoring an Afghan refugee is an opportunity for you to support someone from one of the most vulnerable segments of the U.S. immigrant community and help them to succeed in their career.

Mentors are expected to meet with their mentees at least six times over the course of six months and will be responsible for arranging the logistics of these meetings.

To prepare you for your role as mentor, Tent will provide you with a guide and training, both of which include support and suggested topics for mentor-mentee meetings, such as reviewing your mentee’s resume and cover letter, practicing interview questions and networking, and helping them to develop their professional network.

If you are interested in participating in this mentorship program, please fill out the survey link here [insert link].

Let me know if you have any questions about serving as a mentor.

I hope that many of you will participate in this mentorship program and learn from this wonderful experience!

Best,

[Your name]

Annex

Code of conduct

When working closely with someone in a one-to-one capacity, it is a good idea to have an agreement to ensure that you are both comfortable with how, when, and why you are communicating and working together. Tent recommends that mentors discuss and/or agree on the following with their mentee:

- That you have read and understood the full code of conduct below
- The most appropriate timing and mode of contact (e.g., WhatsApp, email), as well as the best time of the day for you to hold meetings
- Which pronouns to use for your mentee and yourself
- Your boundaries around connecting on social media. Tent strongly suggests that you communicate through phone, text, email, and LinkedIn, rather than other social media
- Your responsibilities as a mentor – for example, that you cannot guarantee that your support will result in your mentee landing a job by the end of the program
- That you cannot promise confidentiality if you are ever worried about your safety, or that of your mentee

You must	You must not
Respect and celebrate differences (e.g., do not discourage religious dress or concealment of any aspect of your mentee’s identity).	Discriminate against anyone on the grounds of gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, race, country of origin, age, or ability. This also includes making assumptions and applying stereotypes.
Treat mentees with warmth and empathy, and listen to their wishes and feelings even if they do not resonate with your own.	Engage in any form of sexual or romantic relationship with your mentee. This includes engaging with or allowing sexualized, suggestive, or provocative language, as well as behavior.
Behave in a calm, positive, supportive, and encouraging way at all times.	Ask intrusive questions about your mentee’s past experiences, their journey to becoming a refugee in the U.S., or any other situation that may elicit traumatic feelings or memories.
Report any safeguarding suspicions, concerns, allegations, or disclosures made by a mentee.	Maintain confidentiality about information indicating that the mentee, or those in close proximity to them, are at risk of serious harm.
Ensure that your relationship with your mentee remains professional at all times. The aim should never be to develop an intimate relationship.	Meet or engage with your mentee while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Respect an adult at risk’s right to personal privacy, but never agree to keep any information relating to their potential harm confidential.	Share your home address or encourage your mentee to share theirs. Where possible, Tent recommends using your work phone and email address to contact your mentee.
Be aware that mentees can develop infatuations (crushes) towards mentors. If this happens, inform the mentorship coordinator, then respond to the situation in a way that maintains the dignity of all concerned.	Arrange a meeting where the purpose is not focused on supporting your mentee to access work or professional opportunities.
Discourage physical contact (if the meeting in person). If your mentee is upset and needs comforting, ensure this is done in a way that is respectful of their personal space (such as a sideways hug) and recognises the diversity of cultural norms with respect to touch (to avoid misinterpretation of your actions), with their full permission and where there are others present.	Photograph or film your mentee, or share photos and films of your mentee, without prior consent.
Agree on appropriate channels and times to contact your mentee (e.g., email or phone), and at what time of day/day of the week.	Investigate any safeguarding concerns or allegations yourself.

Investigate any safeguarding concerns or allegations yourself.	Borrow/lend money, sell things to or buy things from, and/or accept gifts from your mentee. If, at the end of your mentorship relationship, either of you would like to say “thank you”, a card is appropriate.
	Accept, either for yourself or your family, free services your mentee where such services should normally be paid for.
	Serve as a witness for your mentee’s will or be named as one of their executors.
	Rely on your position at the company to protect you if you do not follow the code of conduct.

Endnotes

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14. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/orr/Survey-of-Resettled-Afghans-Public-Summary-of-Findings.pdf>

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27. <https://www.tent.org/resources/us-refugee-hiring-guide/>

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37. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/map/find-resources-and-contacts-your-state>

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Hiring Our Heroes
A U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation Program