Mentor-Protégé Program (MPP)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: What are the minimum qualification criteria to apply for the program?

A: The current minimum qualification criteria are as follows:

- Must hold an active COBID certification*
- Must have been in continuous operation for at least 3 years
- Must be current on all applicable taxes
- Must be current on all required licenses (if applicable)
- Must not be ineligible or debarred from public contracting/public works by BOLI
- Must not be under active litigation that may impact business operations
- Must be willing and able to actively participate in the program, including attending approximately one training and one mentor meeting per month

**The COBID certification qualification criteria are expected to be updated for the upcoming cohort. Interested firms are encouraged to explore eligibility for COBID's Oregon Small Business Enterprise (OSBE) and Emerging Small Business (ESB) certifications and consider applying for these certifications if eligible.*

Q: What types of businesses does the MPP support?

A: The Mentor-Protégé Program (MPP) is designed to support eligible small businesses in the architecture, engineering, and construction (AEC) industries, as well as related/supporting industries that commonly work within the AEC space.

Q: How long is the program?

A: The MPP is a structured, cohort-based program that operates in approximately three-year cycles.

Q: What is expected of firms admitted into the program?

A: Protégé firms are expected to actively participate in the program throughout the cohort period. This includes:

- Attending mandatory monthly trainings
- Actively participating in monthly mentor meetings
- Regular engagement with mentors, technical assistance providers/consultants, and program staff as needed
- Working toward business goals and implementation of program guidance and resources

Q: Is there a cost to participate in the program?

A: No. There is no direct cost for protégés to participate in the program.

Q: How are mentors identified and matched with small businesses?

A: Mentors are experienced industry professionals who volunteer their time and expertise to support firms in the program. Mentor matches are based on the protégé firm's business needs, services, goals, and areas of desired growth.

The MPP maintains an established network of mentors but may also recruit additional mentors and mentor firms based on cohort needs and availability. Admitted protégés may also indicate if there is a specific firm or individual they are interested in being matched with, particularly if there is an existing professional relationship or mutual interest.

Q: What does the application and selection process entail?
A: The application and selection process generally includes:

- Review of submitted application materials
- Verification of eligibility criteria and certifications
- Reference checks
- Introductory interview
- Financial assessment to evaluate if applicant's current financial processes and needs align with the program's resources and capacity
- Final interviews

Applicants will be notified throughout the application process regarding advancement to the next phase or notice of non-selection.

Please note that submission of an application does not guarantee acceptance into the program.

Q: How competitive is the application process?
A: The MPP is a competitive program with limited cohort capacity. Applications are evaluated holistically based on eligibility, business readiness, engagement, program fit, and overall alignment with the program's goals and structure.

Q: How many spots are anticipated for the 2026-2029 cohort?
A: We currently anticipate a minimum of approximately 10 spots in the upcoming cohort. Final cohort size may vary depending on funding and program structure.

Q: When are applications expected to open?
A: Applications are currently anticipated to open within the next 1-2 months, pending final approval of updated qualification criteria and related program updates.

Q: When is the next cohort expected to begin?
A: The next cohort is currently anticipated to begin in late summer 2026.

Q: What materials should interested firms begin preparing now?

- Most recent business tax return including all schedules
- 3–5 key projects, including : customer, contact info, project type, contract amount, year completed, and role your firm served as (Prime/JV/Sub)

Q: Does being on the waitlist guarantee an invitation into the program?
A: No. Joining the notification waitlist only ensures that your firm receives updates and notification when applications open. All interested firms must still complete the formal application and selection process.

Q: Can firms outside of Portland apply?
A: Yes. Eligible firms located throughout Oregon may apply, though firms should be aware that portions of the program will require in-person participation within the Portland metro region.

Q: Who should I contact if I still have questions?
A: Please review the FAQ document and future program updates first, as many common questions will be addressed through those communications. Additional questions may be directed to the Port's Small Business Team email.