

## **ASBDC Accreditation Committee Mentoring Program**

### **Purpose of Accreditation Mentoring Program**

The purpose of the Accreditation Mentoring Program is to provide assistance to Lead Center SBDCs to help them better understand the accreditation process and the ASBDC Accreditation Standards. Mentoring will help the SBDC plan and prepare more thoroughly and effectively for an accreditation review. The mentoring process will help the SBDC gain familiarity with the underlying Malcolm Baldrige based accreditation standards and understand that the SBDC accreditation process is focused on accreditation standards and quality improvement

### **Eligibility**

All Lead Center SBDCs are eligible for the Accreditation Mentoring Program. Mentoring will not be available if a Lead Center SBDC has an open and outstanding report before the committee and is working with an assigned team. While the program is specifically intended to assist those SBDC Lead Center programs that have new state directors or host institutions as well as those programs that have gone through major changes, it can also be a great benefit to those SBDCs that desire to be better prepared for an upcoming accreditation review.

States wishing to participate in the Accreditation Mentoring Program should make a request in writing to the Chair of the ASBDC Accreditation Committee indicating their interest. This request should be made early in the year prior to a scheduled accreditation review in order to provide enough time for the program to achieve maximum benefit from the mentoring process.

There is no requirement for Lead Center SBDCs to participate in the Accreditation Mentoring Program in order to schedule an accreditation visit.

A mentor will be chosen by the chair of the ASBDC Accreditation Committee for each SBDC Lead Center program requesting one. Mentors will be selected from among the more experienced members of the Accreditation Committee or recent past members of the Accreditation Committee who have previously served as team leaders. Mentor selection is based upon the individual's understanding of the accreditation standards and the accreditation process. Every effort will be made to match mentors to programs, taking into consideration similarities between states/regions, the structure of Lead Center programs, and other factors. The number of mentors is limited. Therefore, early request for a mentor is advised.

### **The Program**

Once a mentor has been appointed, the mentor and Lead Center director will discuss the needs of the director and design a program to address those needs. A mentor can be most effective early in the twelve to eighteen month period prior to the accreditation review, thereby enabling the SBDC time to address specific issues in preparation for an upcoming accreditation and allowing the mentor to advise and assist with the development of the Lead Center self-study and

its supporting documents.

The Accreditation Mentoring Program provides four primary offerings that can be combined to customize a program designed specifically for the Lead Center SBDC.

- 1. Training.** The mentor or another committee member may provide a one-day training program for the staff of the Lead Center SBDC. The training program will address the accreditation process, the standards and may incorporate other aspects of the other offerings identified below as well.
- 2. Assessment.** The mentor will be able to make an informal assessment of the state's preparedness for an accreditation review based upon information provided by the Lead Center director and a visit to one or more centers. These assessments are based upon limited information obtained during a short period of time and may differ from the eventual findings of the accreditation review team. The mentor does not represent the opinions nor eventual recommendations or conclusions of the Accreditation Committee nor the accreditation team assigned to the respective state/region.
- 3. Strategic Planning.** The mentor may participate or assist with a strategic planning process as an advisor. They may assist in identifying areas needing attention in preparation for the accreditation review. This option may be incorporated into the Training offering. The mentor's role may also include assisting with identifying key elements of planning and assisting the program through a planning process as needed. Attention will be given to the appropriate alignment of the accreditation standards with the program's goals, objectives, client needs, processes and program metrics. The mentor does not represent the opinions nor eventual recommendations or conclusions of the accreditation committee nor the accreditation team assigned to the respective state/region.
- 4. Consultation.** The mentor will be available for consultation with the Lead Center director and answer questions concerning the accreditation process and preparing for the accreditation visit. The mentor does not represent the opinions nor eventual recommendations or conclusions of the accreditation committee nor the accreditation team assigned to the respective state/region.

The Accreditation Mentoring Program is intended to provide assistance from the perspective of an experienced professional. However, the program does not guarantee results nor relieve the Lead Center SBDC from responsibility for their program and the outcome of their accreditation review. The mentor will not be a member of the accreditation team nor report to it. The mentor cannot be an advocate for the Lead Center program with the team nor during the Accreditation Committee's deliberations regarding the Lead Center SBDC program. The mentor will abstain from voting when the Accreditation Committee votes on the team's recommendations.

### **Administration and Costs**

The Accreditation Committee recommends that the mentor and State/Region Director prepare a brief Memorandum of Understanding which sets out the responsibilities of both parties in the mentoring arrangement.

Any travel costs incurred by the mentor in connection with the Accreditation Mentoring Program will be the responsibility of the Lead Center SBDC requesting the assistance. Mentors will volunteer their time.

### **Related Programs**

Other related programs to help Lead Center SBDCs prepare for accreditation reviews include:

- **Shadowing.** SBDC Lead Center directors and associate/assistant Lead Center directors may arrange with the Chair of the Accreditation Committee to be an observer on an accreditation review. This requires the approval of the Lead Center director whose SBDC program is being reviewed and of the team leader of the accreditation team. The observer is responsible for all their costs associated with the review. Accreditation reviews normally last approximately a week, Monday through Friday noon. This typically requires a Sunday evening visit with the Lead Center director to revisit the accreditation process and outline the plans for the week. This arrangement usually requires the team to arrive on the Sunday in advance of the review. Shadowing will have the greatest impact if it occurs six to twelve months prior to the shadowing state's accreditation review. Observers are required to sign the Accreditation Committee's Code of Ethics prior to the review.

Observers will travel with the team and subject to agreement by the Team and Lead Center Director, be permitted to attend all meetings and discussions, including the consensus discussion that normally takes place on Thursday evening and the exit interview that typically is scheduled on Friday morning. During meetings and discussions between the Team Leader and others (including discussions while traveling), the observer is expected to refrain from participation or asking questions. When the Team Leader and the observer are alone, the observer is encouraged to ask questions about the process to help them better understand what has occurred during the accreditation visit. With these few simple guidelines, the observer will be able to learn much about the accreditation process without inadvertently interfering with the process.

- **Training.** Membership training for the accreditation standards and accreditation process is conducted annually at the spring and fall meetings of the ASBDC. The training is designed to develop an understanding of the accreditation standards and the accreditation process. Lead Center directors and associate/assistant state/region directors, as well as other SBDC professional staff, are encouraged to take advantage of this training.
- **Malcolm Baldrige Programs.** The Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence (<http://www.nist.gov/baldrige/>) has an annual training program for examiners, and in some states quality programs affiliated with the Baldrige National Quality Program also have training programs for examiners (<http://www.baldrigepe.org/alliance/>). These offer opportunities to better understand the Baldrige process and would be beneficial in helping gain a greater understanding of the accreditation process and the accreditation standards which align with the Baldrige standards.

Revised & Adopted – January 13, 2011