



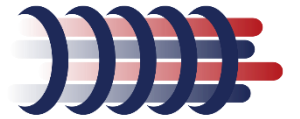
***TRANSIT
WORKFORCE
CENTER***



Federal Transit
Administration

Transit Workforce Center

National Technical Assistance Center
for Transit Workforce Development



INTERNATIONAL
TRANSPORTATION
LEARNING CENTER

ATTAIN

Bus Operator Mentorship and Apprenticeship

July 23, 2025



TWC • TRANSIT WORKFORCE CENTER



Transit Workforce Center – Mission



Operated by the **International Transportation Learning Center (ITLC)**, the **Transit Workforce Center (TWC)** is the Federal Transit Administration's national technical assistance center for transit workforce development. TWC supports the workforce development needs of urban, suburban, tribal, and rural public transportation entities across the country.

Please enter your name, title, organization location in the chat box

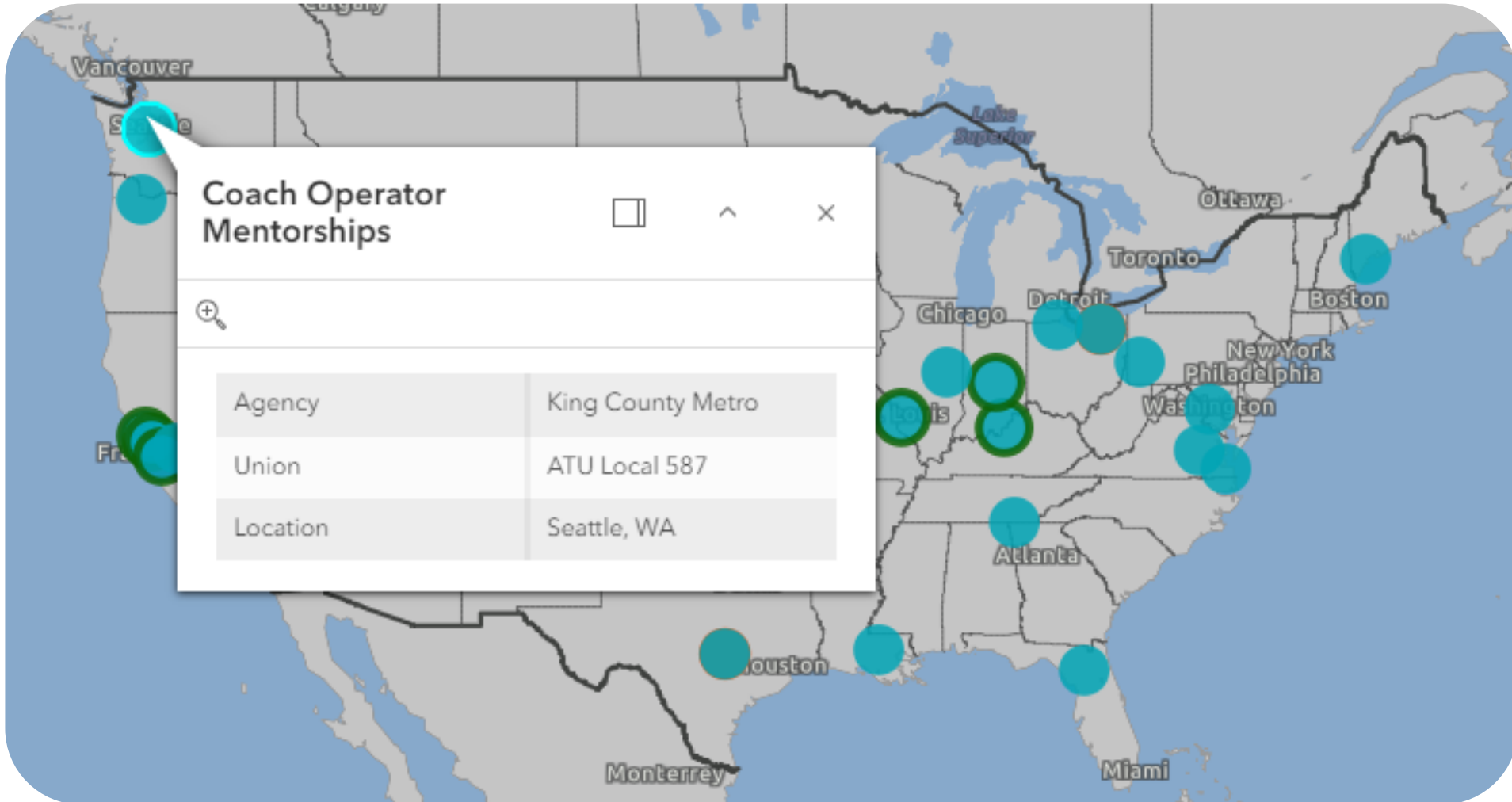
Welcome – Today's Agenda

- Starting an operator mentorship program
- From mentorship to registered apprenticeship
- Mentorship in Practice Panel
- Q&A
- Open Discussion

Please enter your name, title, organization location in the chat box



Growing Trend of Mentorship and Apprenticeship in U.S. Transit Agencies



Locations with Operator Mentorship Programs

AC Transit
Oakland, CA

CapMetro
Austin, TX

CARTA
Chattanooga, TN

Casco Bay Lines
Portland, ME

CATS
Baton Rouge, LA

CENTRO
Syracuse, NY

GCRTA
Cleveland, OH

GRTC
Richmond, VA

Golden Gate Transit
San Rafael, CA

HRT
Norfolk, VA

IndyGo
Indianapolis, IN

KCATA
Kansas City, MO

King County Metro
Seattle, WA

Lane Transit
Lane County, WA

MCTS
Milwaukee, WI

Metro Transit
Minneapolis, MN

MTD
Champaign-Urbana, IL

Riverside Transit Agency
Riverside, CA

RTC
Las Vegas, NV

RTD
San Joaquin, CA

St. Louis Metro
St. Louis, MO

TARTA
Toledo, OH

Tri-Met
Portland, OR

Valley Transit Authority
San Jose, CA



What is Operator Mentorship?

- After successfully completing initial training class, new drivers are paired with mentors who pass on their skills
- Mentors are selected from among the experienced drivers at your agency
- Drivers volunteer their time to act as mentors
- Program may also incorporate ride-alongs or periodic meetings (mentors are typically paid overtime for these events)





Benefits of Operator Mentorship

1

Increased retention

2

Increased confidence
& morale

3

Reduced absenteeism

4

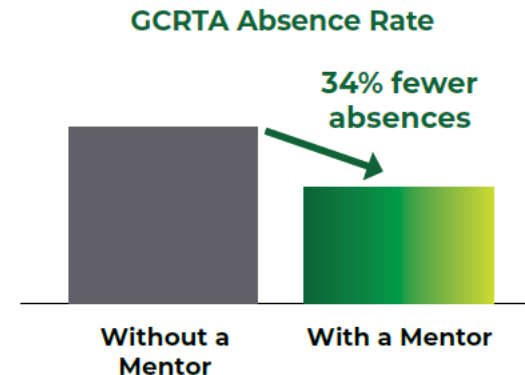
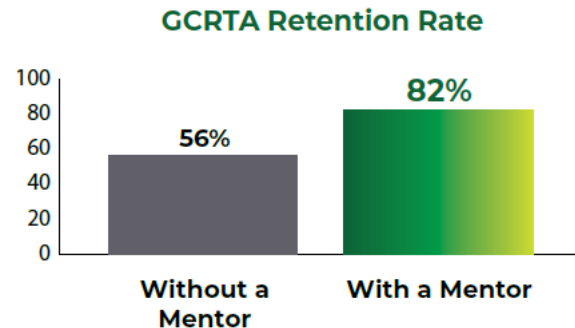
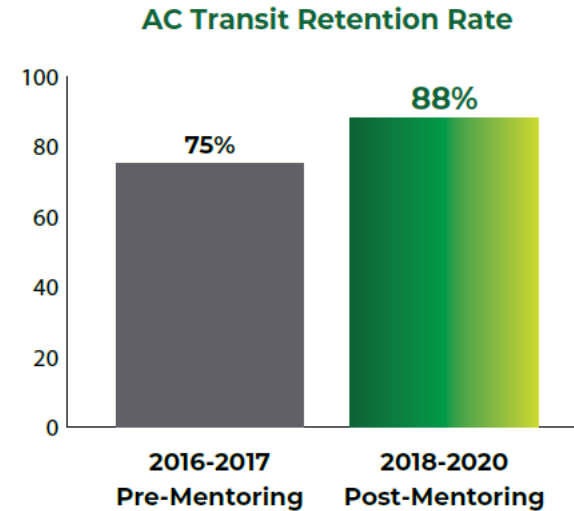
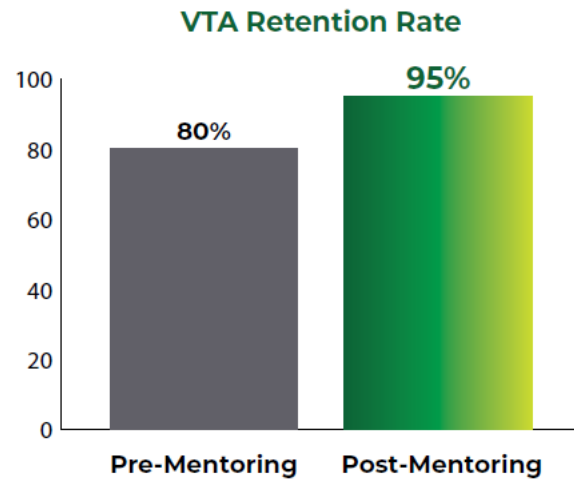
Improved employer
reputation

5

Strong emphasis on
customer service

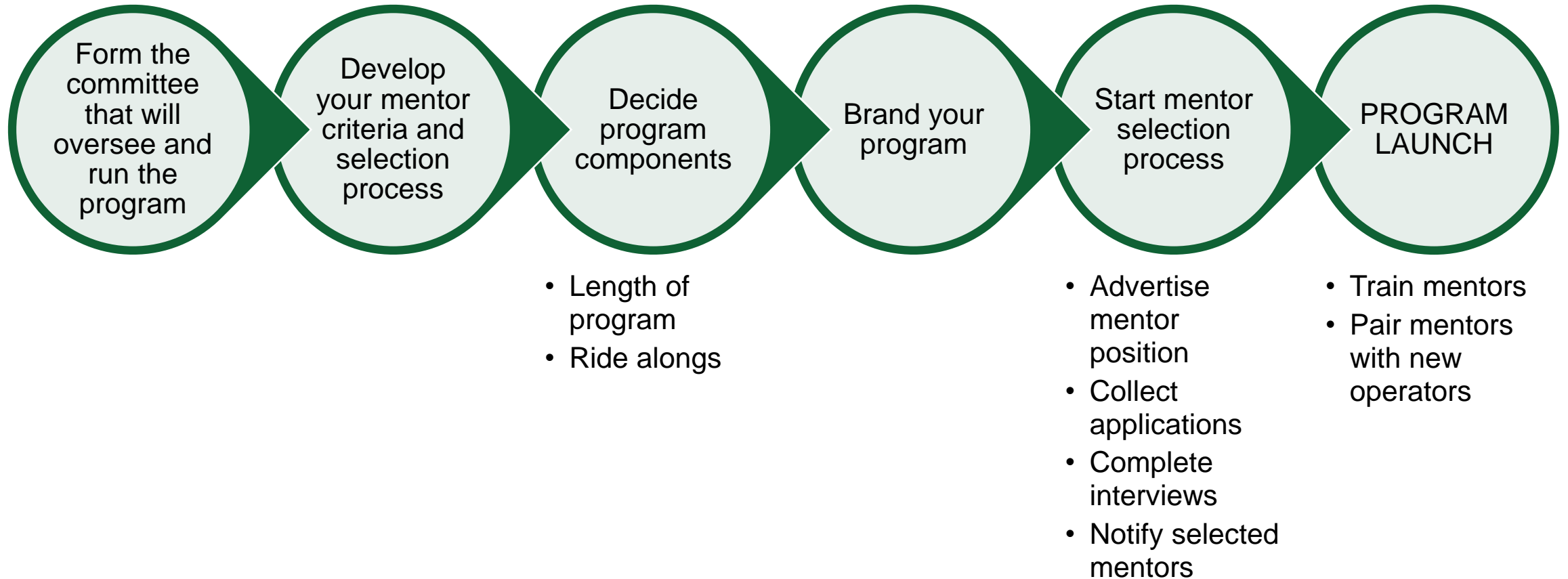


Tracking Mentorship and Apprenticeship Program Outcomes





Starting your mentorship program!





Form the
committee that
will oversee
and run the
program

Equal members from labor/frontline
workforce and management



Develop
mentor criteria
and selection
process

Criteria often includes:

- Years of employment
- Record clean of recent incidents
- Number of unexplained absences
- Adherence to agency policies and procedures



Decide
program
components

Mentorship programs often include:

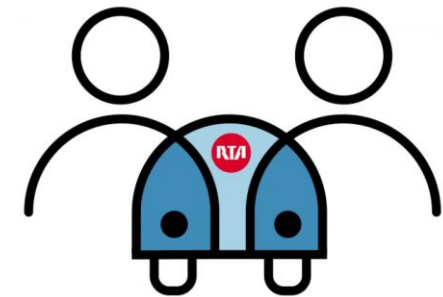
- Ride-alongs
- Mentor meetings
- 12-18 month length of mentorship
- Assigned mentor program coordinator(s)
- Pilot phase



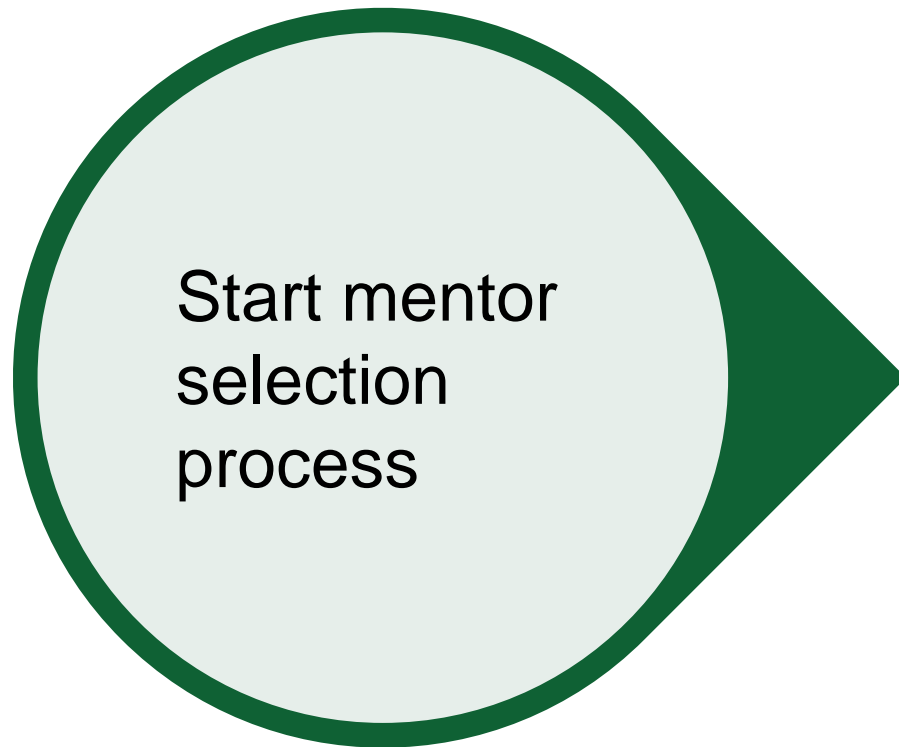
Brand your
program

Mentorship programs often include:

- Mentor identification
- Catchy name
- Logo
- Promotion



POSITIVE IMPACT PROGRAM





PROGRAM LAUNCH

- Mentors are notified and trained
- After completing initial new operator training, operators are paired with mentors
- Program coordinator tracks metrics that show program impacts



Benefits of Operator Apprenticeship

1

Increased retention

2

Increased confidence
& morale

3

Reduced absenteeism

4

Improved employer
reputation

5

Strong emphasis on
customer service

6

Increased level of
professional recognition
for bus operators

7

Funding opportunities:
employers and apprentices

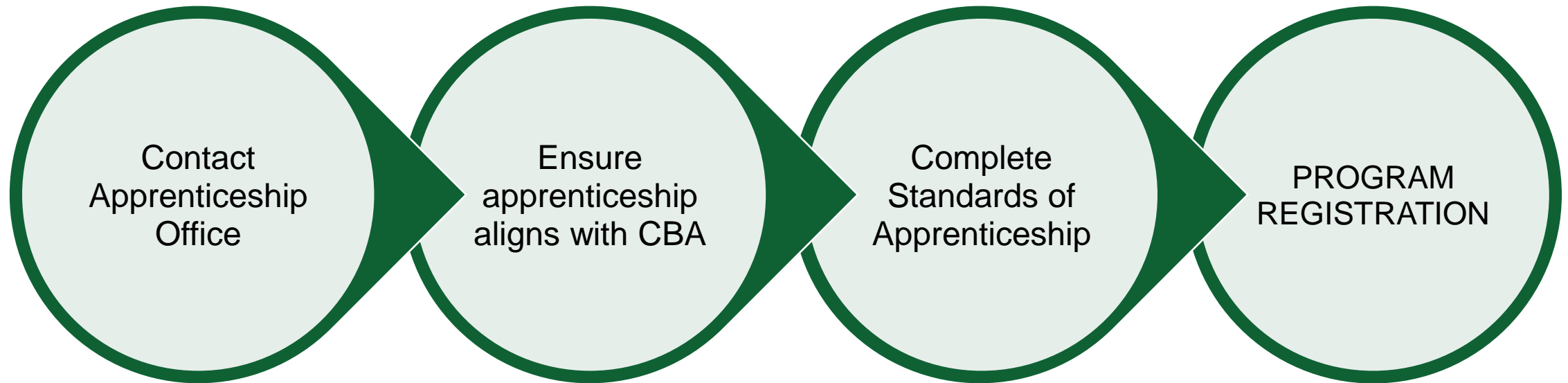


What is a Registered Bus Operator Apprenticeship?

- Basically, registering your mentorship program with the USDOL
- Labor/workforce and management form committee to develop program
- Minimum of 2000 hours of on-the-job learning per year
 - Satisfied by behind-the-wheel time operators already do!
- Minimum of 144 related technical instruction hours per year
 - Satisfied by the training you already do!



Registering your apprenticeship program!





Contact Apprenticeship Office

- Determine whether your state is an OA field office or a recognized SAA
- Find contact information
<https://www.apprenticeship.gov/about-us/apprenticeship-system>
- Reach out to get the necessary forms and boilerplate standards



Ensure
apprenticeship
aligns with CBA

If applicable, ensure that wage progression and terms of apprenticeship align with CBA

- Can be done with an MOU/side letter or added during contract negotiations



Complete Standards of Apprenticeship

- Your Apprenticeship Office representative will guide you through process
- Standards should specify length of program, program type, wage progression



PROGRAM REGISTRATION

- Submit Standards of Apprenticeship to your state office and run your program!
 - Record keeping
 - Periodic review
- Funding opportunities

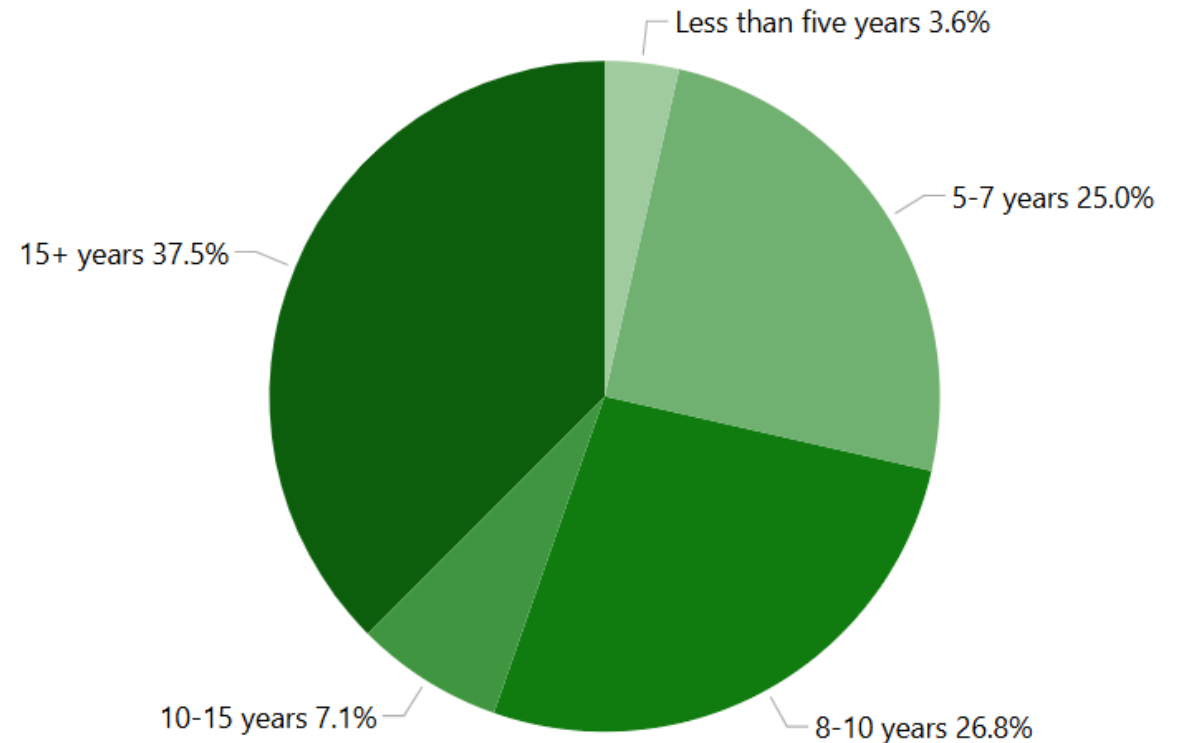


Keys to success: MENTORS



Eligibility requirements:

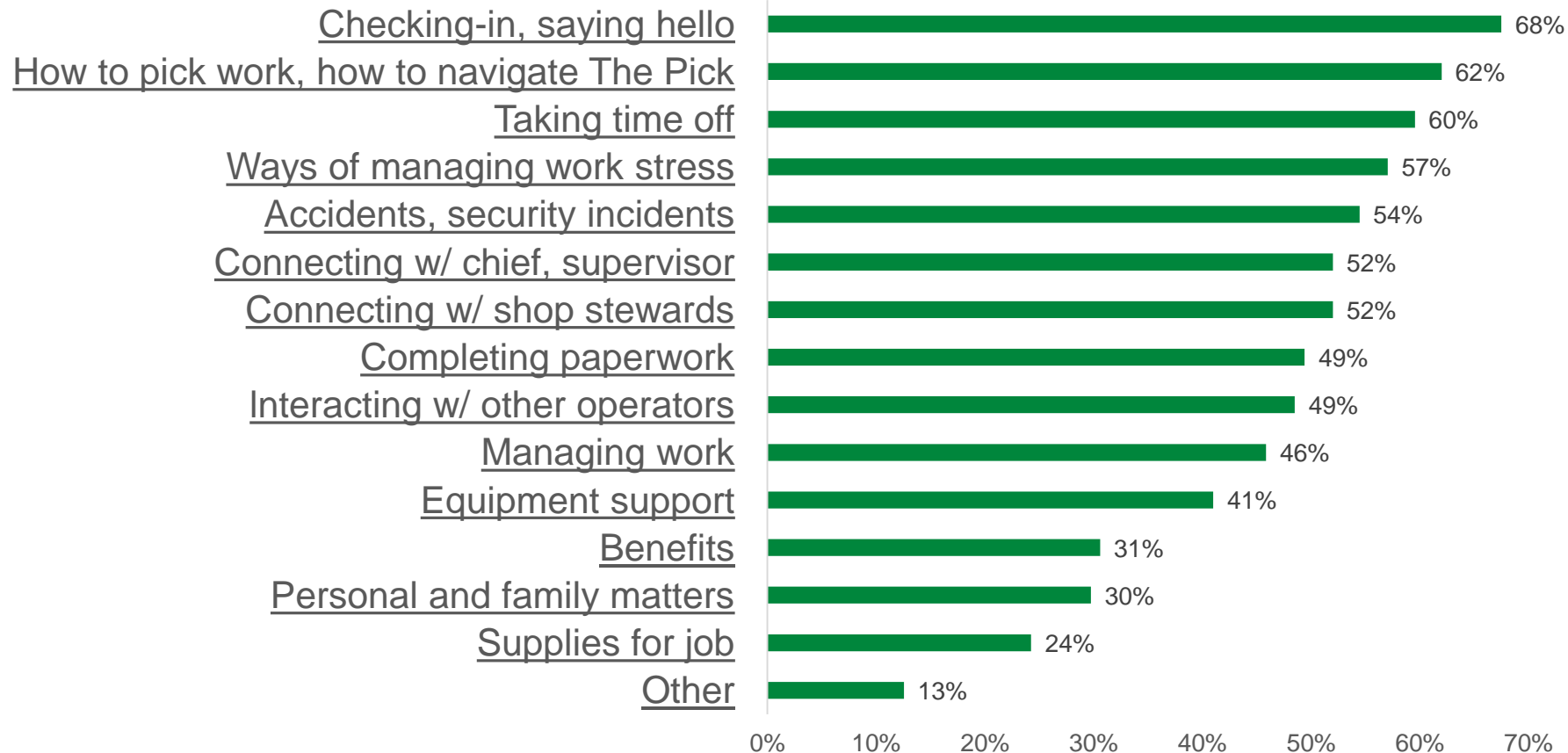
- 3+ years as operator (full or part-time)
- No counseling or discipline in last 12 months
- No attendance issues
- Comfortable engaging with new operators
- Knowledge of policies and procedures
- Able to commit to availability expectations



Keys to success: MENTORS



What do mentors talk about with their mentees?

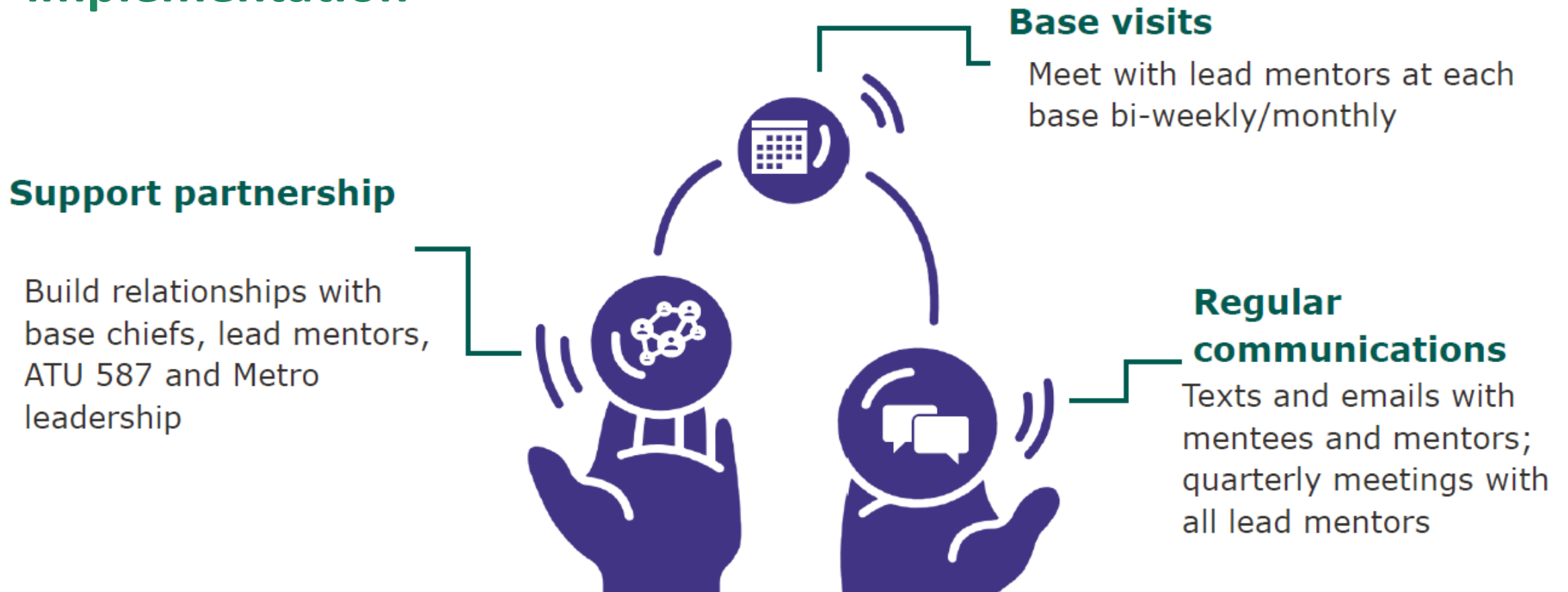


What do mentors say about their experience?

- Enjoy the role of being a mentor
- Feel re-energized for their job
- Feel that their own driving and job has improved
- Feel valued and helpful
- Feel connected and positive wellbeing

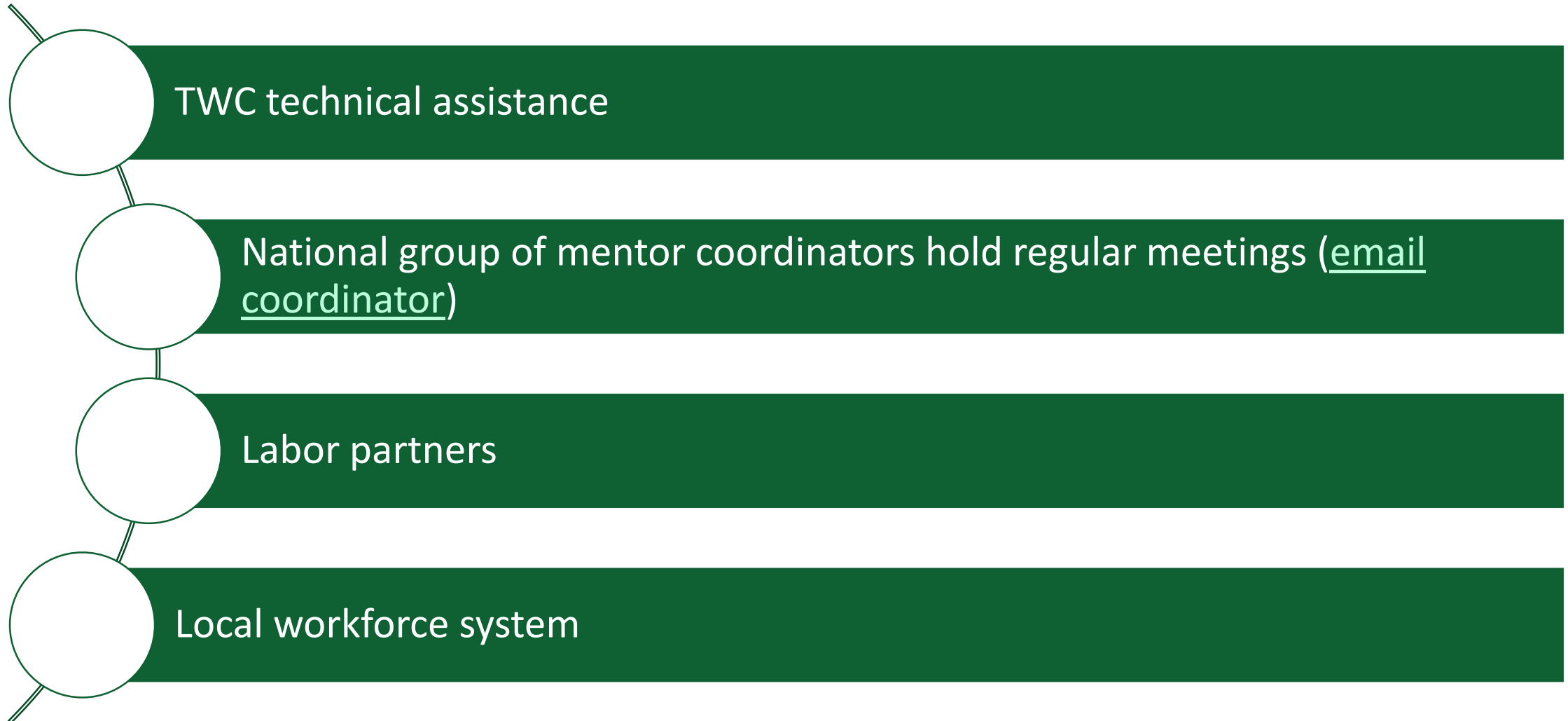
Keys to success: PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Program coordinators play critical role in ensuring smooth implementation





Keys to success: USING AVAILABLE RESOURCES





Mentorship in Practice





Greater Richmond Transit Company ATU Local 1220

Richmond, VA

Ashley Mason

Manager of Employee Engagement, Greater Richmond Transit Company

Wendy Tunstall

Mentorship Coordinator and Financial Secretary, ATU Local 1220



Mentoring, Educational, Employment, Training

Ashley Mason

Manager of Employee Engagement,
Greater Richmond Transit Company

Wendy Tunstall

Mentor Program Coordinator and
Financial Secretary, ATU Local 1220



Introducing M.E.E.T: GRTC and ATU Local 1220's New Training Program

GRTC and ATU Local 1220 are excited to announce M.E.E.T. (Mentoring, Educational, Employment, Training), a new joint program designed to pair new and veteran operators to provide additional support and training as operators begin their GRTC careers. This program, which is designed with help from ATU International and based on the recommendations of peer-reviewed job training studies, creates opportunities for growth for both new and veteran operators.

New employees will receive extra support on the soft skills side of operating a transit vehicle, reflecting GRTC's priority commitment to customer service. Mentors will meet with mentees in both classroom and field environments, giving both parties the opportunity to work on skills and demonstrate their progress.

The organizational goals of this program are to continue to improve operator retention by giving both new and experienced employees the support and network they deserve so they can thrive behind the wheel and everywhere else.

Why is mentoring important?

No amount of classroom training can adequately prepare workers for operating mass transit vehicles.

Real learning for operators takes place on the job, no matter how technically well-prepared a person is for large vehicle operation.

It is a craft that requires an ethic of service, a positive attitude and the ability to make consistently sound judgments throughout the workday.



- Without the guidance and support of someone who also sits behind the wheel or turned a wrench.
- Who understands what the new employee is going through. Often results in the development of negative attitudes, sub-standard professional performance and chronic illnesses from unrelieved stress.

Our First Mentors



**Joel
Armstong**



**Jean
Hamilton**



**Donnel
Harrison**



**Terrel
Monet**



**Todd
Simmons**



**Wendy
Tunstall**



**Keith
Valentine**



**Julio
Vidal**

Qualifications

- At least three years of service
- No more than five no calls or no shows/call outs
- Good safety record
- Character Review (interview process)
- Good appearance/hygiene
- No discipline action in the last 12 months.
- No more than 5 sick occurrences.
- Good communication skills.
- Excellent customer service skills
- ATU Member in good standings.



Duties



- Attend Mentor/Mentee Group Meetings
- Attend Mentor Only Meetings/Trainings
- Perform Mentor Ride-a-longs
- 1 on 1 Guidance



Ashley Mason

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Wendy Tunstall

Mentor Program Coordinator and
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Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District (MTD)

Champaign-Urbana, IL

Valerie Campo

Mentor Program Coordinator, Champaign-Urbana MTD



Mentorship in Practice Panel

Wendy Tunstall

Mentor Program
Coordinator and
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ATU Local 1220 / GRTC

Ashley Mason

Manager of Employee
Engagement
GRTC

Valerie Campo

Mentor Program
Coordinator
Champaign-Urbana MTD

Q&A



Resources Available

- [Transit Coach Operator Competency-Based Framework](#)
- [Map of mentorship and apprenticeship programs](#)
- Examples of operator apprenticeship standards (view in map or email us to request)
- [Step-by-step apprenticeship start-up guide](#)
- [FAQ page](#)
- [Transit Mentorship Metrics](#)
- [Mentor Training](#)

Interested in starting
your own program? We
are here to help!

Scan the QR code to
schedule a meeting!





Thank You!



www.transitworkforce.org

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