

SPONSORSHIP TIP SHEET[©]WHAT
is
Sponsorship?

Sponsorship is using your influential role to provide access to resources and networks to expand a person's visibility and provide opportunities for career advancement. It is a "professional relationship that focuses on career advancement and rests on power." In contrast to mentorship, sponsorship is often an **"episodic, transactional relationship that is critical for high-level advancement."**¹

Sponsorship **IS** ...

- nominating a colleague for an award
- recommending a colleague to serve on a grant review panel
- extending an invitation to write a chapter of a manuscript
- sharing sponsees' accomplishments with others to create or increase an audience's positive impression(s) of them
- using your credibility or reputation to underwrite a sponsees' potential
- connecting sponsees with highly regarded individuals or organizations with opportunities for career advancement
- vouching for someone

Sponsorship **IS NOT** ...

- sharing knowledge and providing guidance
- providing feedback on skills and/or coaching
- mentorship
- reviewing and providing feedback on a manuscript or grant
- providing career advice

WHY is
Sponsorship
Important?

"Women remain underrepresented in top leadership positions in academic medicine. Sponsorship is perceived to be critical to high-level advancement and is experienced differently by women. Increased understanding of how sponsorship works in academic medicine may empower individual faculty to utilize this professional relationship for career advancement, and may provide institutions with a strategy to diversify top leadership positions."¹ **In sum, the literature supports that women in academic medicine have fewer experiences with high-quality sponsorship than men, which puts them at a disadvantage when trying to advance in their careers and perpetuates inequities in leadership.**

WHO
Can Sponsor?

Any faculty member in a position of influence, including but not limited to institutional, departmental, and nationally recognized leaders, etc. Sponsors should have at least one of the following:

- Connections in a certain area
- Recognized knowledge and expertise in a certain area that allows one to have an influential network

A note about this tip sheet: The information is intended to get you started, but is not intended to be comprehensive. Sponsorship can take many forms, and is not limited to the examples below. For instance, **we focus this tip sheet on sponsorship conducted by senior people** which is consistent with traditional definitions of sponsorship. However, early and mid-career faculty can highlight a colleague's accomplishments, nominate colleagues for awards, connect colleagues to influential colleagues at other institutions, etc. Sponsoring in this way supports the person being sponsored, and is a strong way to build influence yourself.

HOW Can I,
as a Leader,
Sponsor?

- Nominate someone for a specialty, institutional, departmental, etc. award
- Encourage participation in specific professional development opportunities
- Recommend someone to a colleague (with particular focus on invited or selective opportunities) to:
 - participate in an invited program, activity, etc.
 - join a national or international society
 - give a talk including Grand Rounds or at a meeting/conference that is invitation only
 - be on a committee
 - join a grant review committee
 - assume a titled leadership role
 - write an invited article, commentary or chapter

¹Levine, R.B., Ayyala, M.S., Skarupski, K.A. *et al.* "It's a Little Different for Men"—Sponsorship and Gender in Academic Medicine: a Qualitative Study. *J GEN INTERN MED* 36, 1–8 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-020-05956-2>

HOW**Do I Set the Stage for My Faculty to be Effectively Sponsored?**

- Think broadly about the people you sponsor
 - Clinician educators
 - Clinician investigators
 - Clinicians
 - APPs
 - Trainees
- Designate a leader in your department to be in charge of quantifying sponsorship activities, sending communications about sponsorship, leading sponsorship efforts, and serving as the person people can come to if they would like to be sponsored and/or don't know how to sponsor
- Be intentional when talking about someone and describing their potential and impact. Educate yourself and your faculty on unconscious biases that reinforce gender biases and stereotyping
- Talk to them about goals in annual reviews, informal conversations about what they are interested in being sponsored for.

NOTE: Before sponsoring someone for an activity with a high activation requirement, consider checking in with them to see if they are interested in, and have the bandwidth, to be sponsored. One possible script is: "I'm happy to sponsor you for this opportunity, but I want to make sure this is something you're interested in doing."

HOW Can I Track Engagement in Sponsorship Activities?

- Appointed funded institutional/departmental leadership roles by gender and race
- Award nominations by gender and race
- Awards received by gender and race
- Leadership role nominations by gender and race
- National society participation by gender and race
- # of annual faculty reviews with documented sponsorship activities or aspirations by gender and race
- International society participation by gender and race
- Local and national presentations by gender and race
- Annual faculty promotion by gender and race
- Designated funded, sponsorship champion (Y/N)

HOW**Do I Know if I'm Being a Good Sponsor?**

See our [Self-Evaluation Checklist](#) for more info

- ✓ I have shared this tip sheet with my faculty at least annually
- ✓ I have nominated X people for a committee, to present at a conference, etc. **with parity to my overall department/section demographics**, in the past 6 months
- ✓ I have had an initial conversation with potential sponsees to determine if they are interested in the sponsorship activity and if they have the bandwidth to do it
- ✓ I have let colleagues know that I have sponsored them, as appropriate (e.g. committee nominations)
- ✓ I have a system for tracking my sponsorship activities throughout the year (similar to a mentorship table on a CV)
- ✓ I invite early career people to present, sit on a committee, etc. in an equitable and systemic way
- ✓ I have integrated sponsorship questions into my annual review, and the reviews of my direct reports:
 - Describe some of the sponsorship activities you have done this year
 - Have you been sponsored in the last year?
 - What kinds of sponsorship would you be interested in?
 - Would you like to be sponsored?
 - What kinds of things would you want to be sponsored to do?

NOTE: Successful sponsorship does not rest on the sponsee being appointed to a role, being given the award, etc.