

Guide to Developing Individual Development Plans

The Individual Development Plan (IDP) is a valuable performance enhancement tool for any federal employee. The IDP can be of great assistance to those who want to enhance skills and strengths and learn more about matters of interest that are relevant to the performance of the agency. Bureaus/Offices may require the use of an IDP at their discretion. Check with your Human Resources Office for the IDP or other appropriate form to be used by your Bureau/Office for documenting employee development needs.

The following is a brief outline of the definition, steps and goals of an IDP.

Goals The employee and the rating official develop goals together. The IDP provides a connection between the employee's career interests and needs to the organizational mission and priorities. The most common goals of an IDP are to:

- Learn new skills to improve current job performance
- Maximize current performance in support of organizational requirements
- Increase interest, challenge, and satisfaction in current position
- Obtain knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for career growth

Definition An IDP identifies a broad spectrum of developmental opportunities for the employee, including on-the-job training, distance learning, formal classroom training, details, shadow assignments and self-development. It addresses the needs of the organization and of the employee beginning with a focus on maximizing employee performance in the current job.

An IDP is a guide to help individuals reach career goals within the context of organizational objectives. It is a developmental action plan to move employees from their current place to where they want to go. It provides the systematic steps to improve and to build on strengths as individuals improve job performance and pursue career goals.

An IDP is a partnership between the employee and the rating official in personal development. Preparing an IDP involves open feedback, clarification and discussion about developmental needs, goals, and plans. Periodic communication between the rating official and the employee is the key to the currency and success of an IDP.

An IDP is not a:

- *Performance appraisal. It is not used to determine pay, awards or other personnel actions based on performance.*
- *Contract for training. Final approval of training opportunities is made based on factors such as timing and budget availability.*
- *Position description. It is not used for clarifying discrepancies in the duties as described.*
- *Guarantee for promotion or for reassignment to another position. While the developmental experiences identified in an IDP may have some training that might qualify the employee for another position or grade, there is no guarantee of advancement.*

Responsibilities As in all aspects of the employee/supervisor relationship, direct and open communication is the key to the success of an IDP. The following responsibilities address the IDP process specifically.

The **employee** is responsible for:

- Assessing personal skills necessary for performing the current position
- Suggesting developmental experiences which would enhance the skills necessary for performing the current position and for the desired career goals
- Identifying personal career goals
- Understanding what skills are necessary for meeting the career goals
- Participating in open discussions with the rating official concerning the elements of the IDP
- Completing the developmental experiences in the IDP as approved by the rating official
- Alerting the rating official when the IDP needs review and updating

The **rating official** is responsible for:

- Providing constructive feedback to the employee about skills necessary for performing the current position
- Suggesting and reviewing employee suggestions for developmental experiences which would enhance the skills necessary for performing the current position
- Counseling the employee about career goals
- Identifying developmental experiences which would enhance the skills necessary for performing in the next type of position toward the employee's career goal
- Participating in open discussions with the employee concerning the elements of the IDP, in periodic updates and reviews of the IDP for currency
- Giving final approval to specific developmental experiences
- Monitoring the progress of the employee in completing the developmental experiences agreed upon in the IDP