

**YOUR INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT
PLAN**

PREPARING A INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

A Career Individual Development Plan (IDP) is:

- A document used to indicate training and developmental needs and to identify possible training solutions.
- An *action plan* which focuses on immediate and short-term (1-3 years) goals that are in line with the longer-term goals of the employee and the organization.
- A joint effort between the employee and the manager. IDP preparation involves feedback, clarification, and discussion about developmental needs, goals, and plans.
- A tool to identify and plan for training and experience which develop the knowledges, skills, and abilities necessary to meet the goals of the employee and the organization.

A IDP is not:

- A long-range development plan. Long-range goals drive shorter-term objectives, but the IDP is an action plan which focuses on the present position and short-range goals.
- A performance appraisal. The IDP does not replace a performance appraisal (strengths and weaknesses are being considered, but the employee is not being rated).
- A Performance Improvement Plan (PIP).
- A contract between employee and supervisor. The IDP is not a guarantee for payment of training.

- A way to clarify or revise a position description. The personnel office and the supervisor need to review this issue, if necessary.
- A promise for promotion upon completion of training objectives. The IDP does not guarantee advancement, but does increase the competitive profile of the employee as he or she develops skills.
- The venue to resolve disputes between the manager and the employee.

Goals of the IDP

- ▶ Learn new skills to improve current job performance.
- ▶ Maximize current performance in support of organizational requirements.
- ▶ Increase interest, satisfaction, and challenge in current position.
- ▶ Obtain know ledges, skills, and abilities necessary to reach career goals that are in line with organizational goals.

The IDP Should Include the Following:

- ▶ Clearly defined developmental goals;
- ▶ The know ledges, skills, and abilities that must be developed in order to achieve these goals;
- ▶ Specific assignments, training courses, projects, and other developmental activities; and
- ▶ Proposed completion dates or time frames for the activities listed.

ROLE OF THE EMPLOYEE, THE SUPERVISOR, AND THE CAREER ASSISTANCE COUNSELOR

Role of the Employee:

- ▶ Examines and set career goals which serve as a basis for the IDP.
- ▶ Initiates the IDP process.
- ▶ Identifies potential learning opportunities that will help meet career goals.
- ▶ Discusses the IDP with the supervisor to meet mutual needs.
- ▶ Works with a career counselor to obtain guidance in the drafting of the IDP and to prepare for a discussion with the supervisor.

Role of Supervisor:

- ▶ Assists with the development of the employee's IDP.
- ▶ Offers constructive feedback about developmental strengths and weaknesses.
- ▶ Acts as a coach regarding possible developmental activities to achieve the objectives and goals defined in the IDP.
- ▶ Defines reasonable limits given organizational requirements and priorities, objectives, and needs of other employees.

Role of the Career Counselor

- ▶ Assists the employee in exploring and setting career goals.
- ▶ Advises the supervisor and/or the employee in the IDP process.
- ▶ Assists both the supervisor and the employee with researching appropriate training and self-development opportunities.
- ▶ Guides the employee in drafting the IDP.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN PREPARING AN IDP

- ▶ The employee's goals should be realistic.

- ▶ A career counselor can provide excellent assistance in the preparation of an IDP. The counselor can serve as a facilitator and help the employee identify know ledges, skills and abilities needed to reach goals, as well as developmental activities to develop those know ledges, skills, and abilities.

- ▶ Training goals should be consistent with, and supportive of organizational goals.

- ▶ The IDP is not a binding document. When the supervisor signs the IDP, it is simply an indication of his or her support for the employee's training and development. The employee may not always be able to take advantage of training because of budgetary or workload constraints.

QUESTIONS EMPLOYEES CAN CONSIDER WHEN SETTING GOALS

- 1) Are there any areas in which you need to improve your performance in your current job?
- 2) What know ledges, skills, and abilities do you need to develop to do your current job better?
- 3) What strengths can you develop further?
- 4) Are your goals realistic?
- 5) What are your long-range goals?
- 6) What know ledges, skills, and abilities are necessary to do the work defined in your long-range goals?
- 7) Given your current skill and experience level, what is a realistic "next step" in terms of working toward your long-range goals?
- 8) Which of these know ledges, skills, and abilities do you already have?
- 9) What kinds of training/experiences would help you develop these know ledges, skills, and abilities?
- 10) What kinds of assistance can you expect from your present office? Are there positions in line with your career goals in your present office?

You may not know all the answers to the questions listed above. It may require that the counselor talk with you or administer an interest inventory, which will provide additional information about you. After helping you to answer the above questions, the counselor can then recommend appropriate developmental activities that will help you attain your career goals.

QUESTIONS THAT CAN HELP THE SUPERVISOR ASSIST THE EMPLOYEE

- 1) What are the specific know ledges, skills, and/or abilities which require reinforcing? In what areas is the employee deficient?
- 2) What are some specific behavioral examples of these deficiencies?
- 3) What is the impact of these deficiencies on the work of the unit? How important are they?
- 4) What type of training or developmental activities could be helpful? Are there constraints in terms of cost or time for training the employee?
- 5) What are the goals of your unit? Your agency?
- 6) What know ledges, skills, and /or abilities are required to reach those goals?
- 7) What training or experience will help your employees meet future goals?

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT IDPs

1. **Q: How is the IDP drafted?**

A: The IDP is drafted by the employee with input from the supervisor and, if desired, the career counselor. The supervisor and the counselor assist the employee in drafting the IDP, specifying in detail the developmental goals and technical skills needed for the present job and/or future positions and helping the employee identify appropriate training and/or developmental activities.

2. **Q: Who signs the IDP?**

A: The supervisor, employee, and counselor sign and date the IDP. It is then forwarded to the training officer for review and signature.

3. **Q: How is the IDP implemented?**

A: The IDP is implemented when the employee initiates and completes the activities listed. The employee may need to complete training form and submit it to the supervisor to arrange for formal training. The employee should indicate on the IDP when other developmental goals are met. The IDP should be reviewed regularly by both the supervisor and employee to ensure targeted dates are being met.

4. **Q: Once the IDP is developed, can I change it?**

A: Absolutely. Unexpected situations can make some planned training impossible, and new job demands can require additional training.

STEPS IN THE IDP PROCESS

STEP 1: SELF-ASSESSMENT

- A. The *employee initiates the IDP process*. The employee reviews all prior job experience, training, education and accomplishments as well as other developmental activities such as details or task force involvement. This background provides concrete information regarding strengths and skills. This step involves review of performance standards described in his or her position description as well as review of the employee's SF-171, OF-612, and KSAs if available.
- B. The employee *evaluates current job performance*. This involves a review of past performance appraisals and an honest assessment of weaknesses discussed previously with the supervisor.
- C. The *employee drafts initial short-term goals* by exploring his or her interests, values and career options. A career counselor can be extremely helpful to an employee in setting goals.
- D. The *employee develops a recommended plan of action* by researching training and developmental activities needed to reach his or her objectives. A career counselor can assist in identifying training resources and in deciding on the most appropriate course of action.

OUTCOME: A working draft of an IDP.

STEP 2: EMPLOYEE/SUPERVISOR MEETING

- A. The *employee arranges a meeting with his or her supervisor*. In this meeting, both the supervisor and employee discuss the employee's needs in the context of his or her job requirements. A career counselor is available to help either the employee or the supervisor prepare for the meeting.
- B. The *supervisor coaches the employee* with appropriate information regarding

challenging assignments, career paths within the organization, the unit's "mission" from the supervisor's perspective, and a reasonable time frame in which to accomplish the objectives set forth in the draft.

OUTCOME: To reach a mutual commitment between the supervisor and the employee regarding the IDP plan.

STEP 3: EMPLOYEE COMPLETES FINAL IDP PLAN FOR SIGNATURES

- A. *The employee makes corrections or additions and prepares the final IDP for the supervisor's approval. If the final copy is acceptable to the supervisor, the supervisor signs the IDP form indicating support of the plan. Then, the employee submits the final IDP plan to the career counselor for signature.*

OUTCOME: To establish a written career development plan.

STEP 4: IDP IMPLEMENTATION

- A. The employee begins training and working on developmental assignments. If necessary, the employee completes the appropriate training forms and submits them to the training officer for review and approval. The employee informs the supervisor of any problems he or she is having with following through.

OUTCOME: To follow through on an IDP commitment.

STEP 5: FOLLOW-UP AND REVIEW

- A. The employee should meet with his or her supervisor every six months to determine if the IDP is meeting the developmental needs of the employee and the organization.

OUTCOME: To systematically continue and support a career development plan for the employee.

TYPES OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES

Sources of Informal Training

On-the-Job Training (OJT)	A planned process where an employee is given progressive and developmental work assignments in an effort to achieve specific learning objectives. The supervisor planning OJT should make the learning objectives as specific as possible and clearly map out the method by which the training should take place (for example, who will do the teaching, what skills and information will be taught, in what order will the information be presented).
Details or Rotational Assignments	A temporary assignment to another work area to fill a manpower shortage, help meet a production deadline, teach or learn a new skill, or gain experience in another job.
Self-study	Independent reading, research, or training courses. Sources for self-study training include the Career Assistance Center, Resource Exchange, the Internet, and local public libraries.
Special Projects	Usually short-term work assignments given to an employee in addition to his or her regular duties. Examples of special projects can include researching articles, conducting a special investigation, writing a book review or report, leading meetings, creating and installing a new system, orienting new employees to their work place, planning an off-site meeting, and joining an ad hoc committee.

Attendance at	Activities that can help employees meet experts in their
Conferences and Seminars	field, learn about new research, and obtain resource materials.
Membership in	These include associations by industry or areas of expertise,
Professional or	such as the Society of Government Economists, Professional
Networking Organizations	Managers Association, or other professional groups such as Federally Employed Women and Toastmasters.

Sources of Formal Training

Department Internal	Provided by the Training and Development department in the Human Resources Center.
Government Interagency	Training provided by an interagency training activity, or by a Federal department, agency, or independent establishment other than the one in which a trainee is currently employed.
Non-government	Training developed and delivered by an independent organization or individual to meet the needs of a wide range of employees. These organizations can include independent consultants, professional associations, colleges or universities, or other commercial or industrial organizations.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSING YOUR IDP WITH YOUR MANAGER

Preparation

- Schedule the discussion in advance.
- Explain what you want to discuss and why.
- Shortly before the meeting, review all of your materials: worksheets, notes, and your IDP draft.

Setting

- Suggest a setting that ensures comfort, confidentiality, and trust.

Conducting the Discussion

- Describe again the purpose of the session and your objectives for requesting it.
- Review your draft IDP, explaining the reasons behind your choices.
- Ask probing questions, if appropriate, to get your manager's feedback. For example:
 - In what areas do you think I could improve?
 - What would you like to see me doing in the future?
 - How will I know when I am performing at the level you would like?
 - How do my goals fit in with the organization's goals?
- Discuss creative ways to improve performance or meet your goals.
- Share your reactions and express appreciation for your manager's input.

Concluding the Discussion

- Ask your manager if he or she has any other issues or concerns to discuss
- Clarify the steps you will take.
- Set time frames for actions to be taken.
- Schedule a follow-up session.

How to Construct an Individual Development Plan (IDP)

Supervisor's Desk Aid No.

ATLANTA CAC
(404) 562-2022

To survive and thrive, the Department of Labor must transform itself into a Lifelong Learning Organization where all employees can achieve their full potential. The IDP is a short-term action plan designed to help your employees "grow in place" and master skills or learn facets of their current jobs better. The IDP outlines training and development needs for the next year or two and lists possible training solutions. This Desk Aid is intended to help supervisors who are either unfamiliar with the IDP process or who need a refresher.

The IDP is . . .

- A process to help employees do a better job where they are now.
- A way employees can close the gap between where they are and where they want to be in their current jobs and in the near future.
- Related to organizational needs and goals.
- A document where employees can chart and monitor their own individual development.
- A joint effort between employees and their supervisors.

The IDP is not . . .

- A performance appraisal. Employees are not being rated.
- A performance improvement plan (PIP).
- A promise of promotion.
- A contract or guarantee of payment for training.
- A long-term development plan.

Your supervisory role . . .

- Encourage and support your employees' self-development.
- Suggest that employees attend an IDP workshop or visit the Career Assistance Center (Room 6B80) for individual help in formulating their IDPs.
- Give employees your perspective on:
 - ✓ Skills that are in demand.
 - ✓ Short-term plans for the organization.
 - ✓ Your employees' strengths and any areas where training may be beneficial.
 - ✓ Constraints you may be under from a budget, time, or staffing standpoint.
 - ✓ Training and development options that would meet employees' goals.
- Allow time for employees to attend training and work on self-study and detail developmental assignments.