U.S.NRC
United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Protecting People and the Environment

The Individual Development Plan (IDP) Process

An Employee's Guide for Individual Development Career Planning

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HRTD
Human Resources
Training & Development

The Individual Development Plan (IDP) Process
An NRC Employee Guide for Individual Career Development Planning

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Purpose Of This Guide

The NRC Training and Development Strategic Plan lists as its first goal:

> *'Individual Performance — Ensure that training and development opportunities enhance individual performance and support continuous learning at all levels.'*

It also identifies the following as one strategy for reaching that goal:

> *'Encourage the use of individual development plans (IDPs) to guide individual training and development activities.'*

The IDP Guide supports both this goal and strategy by providing information to both employees and their supervisors on the importance of the Individual Development Plan process to employee career growth, development and performance as well as long-term agency effectiveness. It also provides step-by-step instructions on how to prepare an IDP as well as additional resources, tools and tips designed to ensure the development of a meaningful IDP; one that supports an employee's career goals and aspirations as well as the agency's mission.

Who Should Read This Guide?

Regardless of your current position within the agency, this guide is a **"must read."**

It can be used by **managers** to begin the conversation with staff about the importance and development of an effective IDP.

It can be used by **staff members** to, not only develop an effective **IDP**, but to help clarify career goals. It provides an individual the opportunity to **reflect and answer the questions:**

Where do I want to be 5 years from now?

&

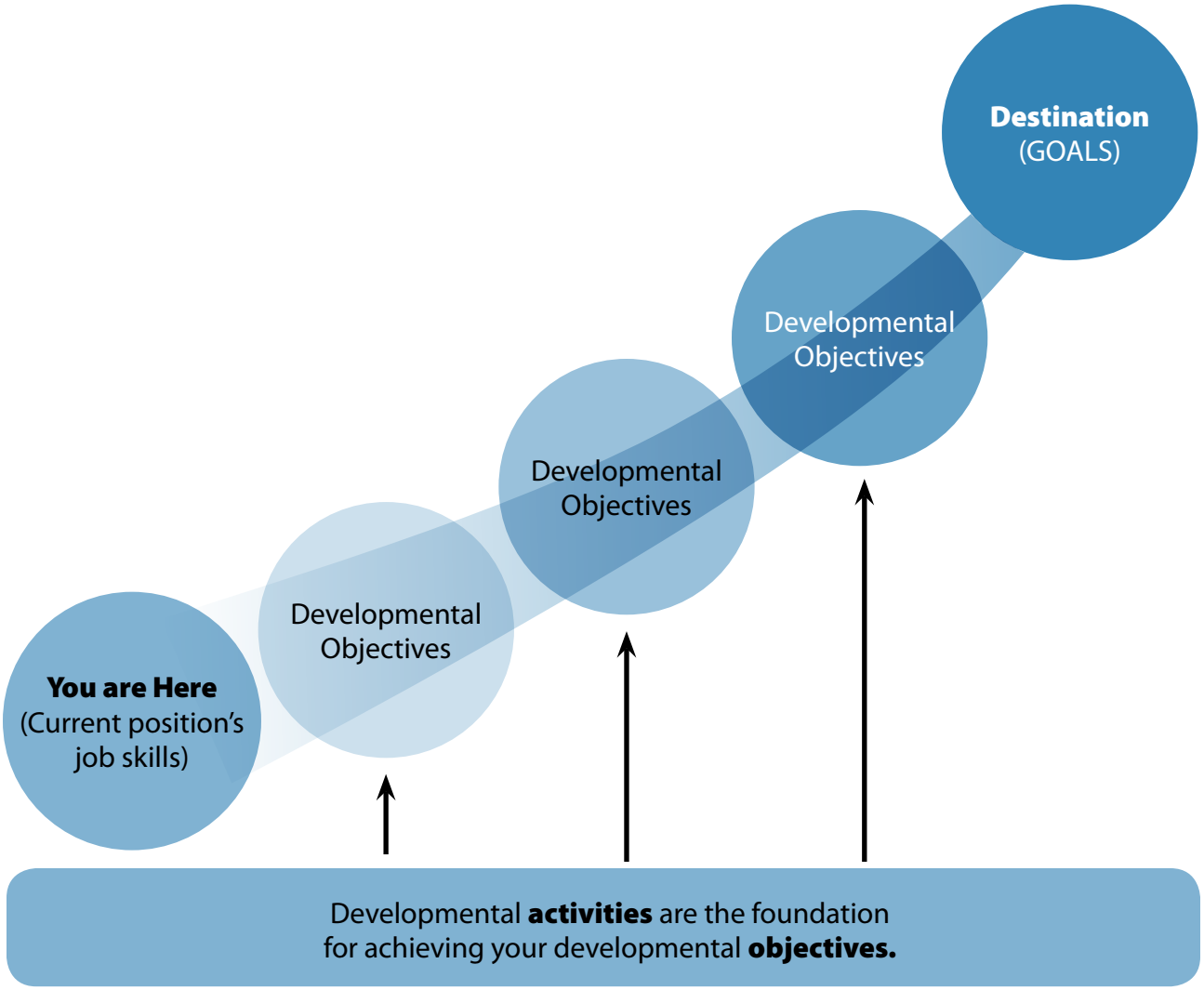
What do I do to get there?

What Are IDPs?

Roadmaps to the Future

IDPs are written schedules or plans designed to meet your particular goals for development. Using an IDP is a systematic way of planning for training and gaining experience in order to develop the specific skills and knowledge you may need. Rather than haphazardly spending time and financial resources on what may or may not be useful activities, the IDP gives both you and your supervisor the opportunity to set some developmental objectives and engage in those experiences that will support these objectives.

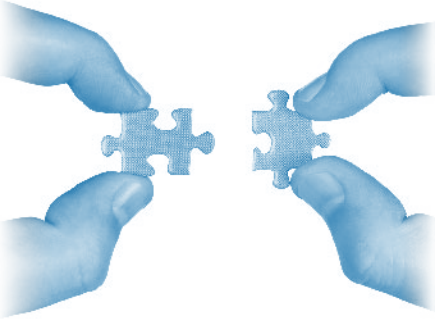
Think of an IDP as a career roadmap, a way to assess where you are right now; determine where you want to go and how to get there. Consider it as a "living document" and use it regularly to keep a record of completed developmental activities and to reflect any changes in your work assignments needs or goals. If you change positions within or outside your agency, take your IDP with you and adapt it to your new position.



An Opportunity to Reflect and Learn

When was the last time you sat down and assessed where you are professionally and where you want to be? IDPs can be used to plan your training and employment related developmental learning experiences such as rotational assignments, special projects, job-sharing activities, internal training courses, and external training courses. An IDP can change from year to year. Its primary purpose is to help:

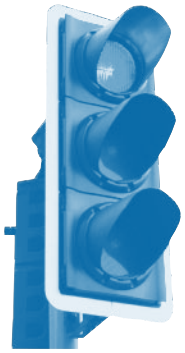
- Assess your particular strengths,
- Set reasonable goals,
- Provide you an outline of activities needed to move you towards the full performance level of your current position, and;
- Provide a framework for development for a future position.



A Partnership between Employee and Supervisor

IDPs are extremely valuable because the process includes both your viewpoint and that of your supervisor. This process is a chance for your supervisor to find out about your goals and how you see yourself in the organization. It also implies a responsibility on your supervisor's part: in order to get a true picture of your career possibilities, you need information on your organization's long-and short-range plans, its staffing needs, its need for particular skills, and what career ladders exist or are planned. You need feedback, too, on your strengths and weaknesses and goals. Your developmental goals are considered in so far as they are mission related and or congruent to your branch office work product priorities. **An employee's supervisor is a key partner in the development and successful implementation of an employee's IDP.**

IDPs are Not:



Fixed in Stone — Provided you and your supervisor agree, you can go back and change your goals and activities to reflect changes in your current position or future aspirations.

Employee Performance Appraisals — A performance appraisal looks back on past performance. An IDP is an action plan that looks forward.

Promises — If conditions change (e.g. time, deadlines, availability of training and budget changes) you and your manager can develop a Plan B to pursue your goals.

The IDP Process is about answering the following questions:

Where am I now?
Conduct a self-assessment to determine current skills, interests, and values. In addition to an assessment of current job strengths and areas for improvement, ask questions such as: What do I value? How satisfied am I in my current job? How well does my job meet my needs? If I wanted to make a change, what would it be? How do others see me? How do I want to be seen? What kind of person do I want to be? What makes me happy?

Where do I want to be?
Once you have reviewed your current skills, interests and values, begin to examine the options available. Ask questions such as: Do I want to move up or over to a new organization? Enrich my present job? Develop new skills?

How will I get there?
After deciding where you want to be, identify developmental areas. Ask questions such as: What specific skills, knowledge, and competencies do I possess? What areas do I need to strengthen now to meet where I am? What areas do I need to strengthen for future assignments?

How Do I Complete My IDP?

Developing IDPs involves:

STEP 1 Understanding Where You Are and Identifying Where You Want To Be

It is important to understand what skills are necessary to perform your job at the full performance level. Review your last performance appraisal (if applicable), job standards, and your current full-performance job description to identify gaps between your current knowledge, skills, and abilities and the level that is required to function at the full performance.

Conduct a self-assessment to determine current skills, interests, and values. In addition to an assessment of current job strengths and areas for improvement, ask questions such as: What do I value? How satisfied am I in my current job? How well does my job meet my needs? If I wanted to make a change, what would it be? How do others see me? How do I want to be seen? What kind of person do I want to be? What makes me happy?

Think about where you want to be professionally 1 to 2 years and 3 to 5 years from now. Do you want to be in a different type of position completely? Do you want to move to the next grade level or position? Get a copy of that job description and determine the differences between that and your current position. Be honest with yourself about your current skills and future aspirations. If you are unclear about the direction you want to head with your career, this is the time to consult with a career counselor or mentor.

Before moving to Step 2, use the following Self-Assessment Questionnaire (pages 6 – 9) to think about and outline your career goals. Think of it as a tool for documenting and understanding your own "story".

Step 1A – Self Assessment Questionnaire

Use this tool to help you reflect on your knowledge, skills and abilities, interests and current work expectations.

Achievement Areas

☐ Describe two or three pieces of work or projects of which you are particularly proud.

☐ What was it about your unique qualities, skills, knowledge, or strengths that made it possible to achieve these results?

☐ What are three professional strengths that you feel you have?

Weaknesses

☐ List below two or three aspects of your job you avoid doing, don't enjoy doing, don't know much about, or don't think you are very good at.

☐ Identify someone who does the tasks that you are weak at well and ask for their guidance on how to improve your skills in this area.

☐ Identify two or three new development activities or processes that will engage in to improve your skills in these areas.

Job Specific

☐ List three actions you would like to take this year to gain a better understanding of the organization, your unit/division/department, or your own job?

☐ What kind of support and/or guidance would you like to see from your supervisor?

☐ Identify at least two potential mentors with 5 or more years of agency experience that can help with your job skills development, which are the technical skills of your job, and career planning skills development.

Office Plans

(Note: You may want to take this sheet with you when initially meeting with your supervisor to discuss the development of your plan. (See page eight read more about that meeting.)

☐ What's expected of your office this year? If you don't know, ask your supervisor or team leader to identify your office's goals.

☐ What are the new initiatives in your office or branch this year?

☐ **List the office goals, projects, or new initiatives fit best with your interests, education, strengths, and professional work experience.** Talk with your supervisor, team leader, or colleagues about these possibilities and add other ideas they may have. At this point, the list of possible assignments may look too long. Talk to your supervisor and colleagues about what projects it would make sense for you to assist with.

STEP 2 Identifying Long-Range and Short-Range Professional Goals

Now that you have a better understanding of your current situation and future possibilities and aspirations, you are ready to draft long-range and short-range professional goals. A goal is an end state, a desired outcome. When using a road map analogy, the goals are the destination, while developmental objectives and activities are the steps and directions to getting there. IDPs contain short-range and long-range goals. Short-range goals are outcomes that you want to achieve within the next 1 to 2 years while long-range goals are outcomes you want to achieve within the next 3 to 5 years. Goals beyond 5 years are not practical for IDP purposes.

Goal setting is the cornerstone of the IDP. Developing clear and measurable long-term and short-term goals is critical to identifying appropriate developmental objectives and activities.

An effective goal is S.M.A.R.T.

S **Specific** — Clear enough that others can understand it and conceptualize it.

M **Measurable** — Goals do not have to have numerical measurements, but you and others need to be able to know, through observation, that you have completed the goal.

A **Achievable** — While goals should stretch you, they need to be concrete enough so that they can be achieved within the timeframe designated and within reasonable means by you and the agency. .

R **Relevant** — Your short-term goals need to be aligned with your position or other agency positions you hope to obtain as well as the agency's missions.

T **Time Bound** — As with writing down a goal, setting a realistic time frame, helps drive completion.

An example of a short-term goal is: **Performing all of the duties of a program manager with minimal intervention from a supervisor by the next rating period.** OR: **Being certified as a program manager by the end of the year.** (One of the requirements of your current position).

An example of a long-term goal might be: **Assume the role of Senior Technical Leader.**

Now you are ready to identify your developmental objectives.

STEP 3 Identifying Your Developmental Objectives

Developmental objectives are the areas that you choose to improve. Understanding the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) of your job or the job that you aspire to is the first step to identifying your developmental objectives.

What are KSAs? KSAs are a series of elements an employee needs to have to perform a task or position. For purposes of developing an IDP, they are defined as:

Knowledge: A body of information required to complete a task or demonstrate a concept. (Ex. Regulations governing the nuclear industry.)

Skills: A physical and observable activity used to complete a task. (Ex. Writing, presenting, oral communication, analyzing a problem.)

Abilities: The power to use skills to develop a specific product within the context of a position. (Ex. Ability to draft comprehensive analyses of regulatory issues confronting the inspection process in a timely manner.)

In the case of the short-term goal on page 10: **Program Manager certification,** the KSAs and your developmental objectives (see STEP 4) are prescriptive and will be embedded in the developmental activity you pursue (program manager certification training). But what if your position is a grade 12/13 and your goal is to acquire KSAs that are outlined in your position at the 13 level? What about your long-term goal of assuming a managerial position? What KSAs can you address that might help support both goals?

First, briefly identify the required duties or tasks outlined in the full performance level job description involved in being a grade 13 project manager. In the case of a project manager, they might include:

- Planning new projects
- Guiding team members
- Writing technical reports
- Managing workflow
- Managing a budget

Next, select one duty or task. For example: **Writing technical reports**

For that one duty or task (e.g., writing technical reports), write down the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to do that task. **Ask: What would someone new to this task have to learn to do the job successfully?**

For example:

- Ability to analyze data and form conclusions
- Knowledge of the organization's technical requirements.
- Writing clearly and grammatically correct.

Then, include those you need to improve as your development objectives.

STEP 4 Meeting with Your Supervisor to "Plan" The IDP

In this meeting, your task is to share with your supervisor your current IDP draft which includes short and long range goals, and current developmental objectives you plan to address during the upcoming performance cycle.

The supervisor's task is to:

- Listen and provide feedback on your goals and developmental objectives, ensuring that they align with the priorities of the office.
- Share information about the anticipated needs the office's and agency's over the next 1to 5 years as they relate to new programs, mission changes, technology advances, pending retirements, hiring needs, and requirements for new specialized skills and expertise.
- Discuss any discrepancies between your developmental objectives and improvement areas the supervisor identifies.

Once both parties are clear about the goals and developmental objectives, you and your supervisor can discuss and brainstorm activities that can address your developmental objectives. This is the time to get suggestions from your supervisor on possible rotations, job developmental activities (e.g. ad hoc work group assignments); trainings, and other developmental opportunities (upcoming speakers, articles, etc.)

STEP 5 Researching and Identifying Learning Opportunities That Address Your Developmental Objectives

Identify developmental, training, rotations and other activities that can help you achieve your goal. Make sure that they specifically address your developmental objectives and align with your short- range and long-range goals. The column, developmental assignments is for any training other than formal training courses and for the assignments that will help developed the needed knowledge, skills, and competencies. You should include anticipated target dates and be as specific as possible. An example would be "complete a rotational assignment in branch office X for 4 weeks to work project Z from May 2007 to September 2007. Describe the appropriate formal training and developmental assignments for such knowledge, skills, competency needed.

- Activities should be realistic and attainable, given the employee's workload and other resource-related factors.
- Activities should be specific and meet the developmental goals of the IDP.
- Activities should have some degree of challenge, but not be so difficult that they are nearly impossible to complete.
- Cost effectiveness should be a consideration when evaluating whether or not activities are feasible.
- The overall goal in planning for the future should be to further the mission of the agency and to attain the competencies necessary to succeed in a chosen profession.

STEP 6 Drafting the IDP

You now have all of the information you need to begin drafting your IDP. Now it is time to put ink to paper and prepare a first draft. Listed below are steps for completing the form. A sample form is also on page 20 of this guide. Use Form 321 located in INFORMS when developing your final official copy.

Get the Form

- Go to INFORMS and access Form 321
- Review the Form

Insert Goals

You may want to revisit STEP 2 on pages 10 — Identifying your long-range and short- range goals before you begin typing or review some of the suggestions in the goals section of the IDP sample form below.

NRC FORM 321
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission

Suggestions When Writing Your
INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

1. Employee's Name	
2. Position Title	3. Series and Grade
4. Organization	

5. Career Goals (Include Positions)*

IDP GOALS ARE: Pertinent to your work and career; Something you see as worthwhile to strive for; An improvement or mastery of some skill in your current job, a new responsibility in your current job, or another position. Check out the Self-Assessment Questionnaire on pages 6 — 9 to help you think deeper about your career goals.

A. Short-Range Goals (1-2 years) – Specify positions, titles, series and grades.

Depending on your status (new, experienced) (1) Focus on improving current work; (2) Positions you want to assume within the next 1 — 2 years: while (3) Considering your long range goals. Goals should be S.M.A.R.T. (Specific; Measurable; Appropriate; Realistic; Time-sensitive).

CONSIDER:
Reviewing page 10 of the IDP handbook on IDENTIFYING SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM GOALS.

If you want to move up a grade, or assume a new position within the next two years, look at the grade or position requirements. Consult with your supervisor to obtain copies.

STUCK? Sometimes it is easier to identify long-range goals first, then go back and look at your short-range goals.

B. Long-Range Goals (2-5 years) – Specify positions, titles, series and grades.

Where do I want to be professionally 2 — 5 years from now?

CONSIDER:

- ❑ Checking out career literature and talking to those who do what you'd like to do some day.
- ❑ Taking time to reflect on your past positions or activities, what you liked and didn't like doing, and what you'd like do in the future.
- ❑ Contacting the NRC career counselor. To find out whether you qualify for NRC career services, contact Rhea Flanders in HR at: 301-492-2294.

List Developmental Objectives

- Developmental Objectives – What do you need to develop or improve to reach your goals? Objectives should be in the form of KSAs that you need to improve and that are required in order to meeting your short and long term goals. Go to page 11 of this handbook to learn more about developmental objectives.

Developmental Objectives
List the knowledge, skills, and abilities you want to gain or improve.
Knowledge: What do I need to know in order to achieve my goals? Skills: What do I need to be able to do? Abilities: How do I need to be able to do it?

List Developmental Activities

- Supporting Training – What activities will help you develop or improve? Make sure that training and other activities specifically address your developmental objectives and align with your short-term goals.

- Formal Training – Outline internal and external formal learning opportunities. List the specific courses you plan to take, where they are given, the costs, and dates they are given.

- Other Activities – Use this for development experiences not covered in the other two columns; e.g. for meetings or professional societies, conferences, independent study, and etc.

- Read more about developmental activities on pages 15-16.

7. Supporting Developmental Assignments	8. Supporting Formal Training	9. Other Activities
List details, rotational assignments, on-the-job assignments, task groups, committees, etc. (Specify scheduled dates for each developmental activity).	(Specify scheduled dates for each developmental activity.)	Include supplemental readings and other self-development activities.
See pages 15-16 of the IDP Handbook that discusses on the job activities that can support learning.	The cost and time allotted for any training must be approved by your supervisor.	What other activities will help you achieve your objectives? Articles? Shadowing? Interviewing others?

STEP 7 Meeting With Your Supervisor To Finalize Your IDP

Once your supervisor has had an opportunity to check on funding and review your plan, you may be able to agree on your development plan. You and your supervisor should then sign the final IDP form and discuss follow-up needed to carry out those agreements. Since your development is primarily your responsibility, your supervisor will probably rely on you to set up follow-up meetings with colleagues, complete training requests, and make travel preparations, if needed. It's wise to prepare and execute training forms for the year within 2 weeks after this meeting with your supervisor based on feedback from your supervisor about available resources.

Examples and Definitions of Developmental Activities

Mentoring or coaching is a less structured form of on-the-job training that extends beyond learning specific skills or processes. The purpose of mentoring or coaching is providing employees with ongoing feedback about progress in specific job requirements. This may occur through formal or informal discussions that allow them the opportunities to learn and refine their knowledge base by asking questions of the mentor/coach, through observation, or through completion of short tasks or assignments to "try out" a particular skill or subtask. Mentors are generally more senior employees selected by employees (or supervisors) who provide advice or counsel about specific problems or issues based on their experience. Coaches are more likely to be selected by supervisors and tend to take a more pro-active role in providing employees with feedback about performance or advice and counsel or helping employees determine their career goals and how to reach them.

NRC Classroom programs: HRTD offers a wide range of learning opportunities.

External Training Programs: Many organizations, agencies, and organizations provide a variety of training opportunities. (Access to these opportunities is based on office resources and budget constraints).

Self-instructional programs: These courses are an extremely flexible method of individual development. Programs covering individual topics or entire programs of study are available as books, audiotapes, computer-based training or on the Internet.

On-the-job learning: This is an extremely effective individual development method. This includes such activities as:

- **Special Projects** in current organization can help the employee develop new skills and knowledge

- **Shadowing** allows the employee to follow his or her host throughout the workday thereby allowing you to view a particular job, career, style and/or office by observing the duties, responsibilities, and work environment of an individual. Through questions and observations of the host's daily routine, you gain a better awareness of the responsibilities of the individual, the educational background needed, the nature and pace of the job, the breadth of responsibilities, as well as the general focus of the office.

- **Rotational assignments** are designed to broaden knowledge of and experience at the NRC. These are assignments where employees have an opportunity to work in another program office. Examples of possible developmental assignment opportunities include:

    - A specific, significant assignment with vastly different duties in your division
    - A project or rotation in another division within your home agency
    - A project or rotation with another agency (not your home agency)
    - A rotation outside of the Federal Government
    - A rotation with the Legislative or Congressional branches

- Cross-Organizational Projects address new initiatives, special studies, and emerging priorities.

Participation in professional organizations: This is an excellent way to network and gain knowledge and skill in a particular field.

Attendance at professional conferences: This is a way to gain insight and knowledge on advances that are occurring at other similar organizations.

Ten Things to Remember when Developing IDPs

1. **IDPs can be vehicles for professional and personal development.** Visualize the "sweet spot"… the intersection of the skills you need to help your organization meet its goals and the skills you need to meet your personal goals

2. **Bloom where you're planted.** IDPs help you contribute and benefit the most from where you are now. It is critical that you learn to master the key aspects of your current job as the first aspect of your employee development.

3. **Use experienced co-workers, and mentors as sounding boards.** Your IDP should not be developed in isolation. In addition consulting your supervisor, It is beneficial and helpful get feedback and perspectives from others on the development of an IDP.

4. **Think beyond in-class training.** Effective development includes a range of activities such as shadow assignments, leadership interviews, stretch assignments, on-line training, and self-study.

5. **Think outside the elements of job standards, performance reviews, and job descriptions.** Your workplace is filled with learning opportunities to help you advance towards your goals. Consider working on task forces, new office initiatives, and cross-office teams.

6. **Developing Your IDP Encourages Commitment.** Learning research shows that you're more likely to succeed in your goals if you make written commitments and share them with others.

7. **Consistency enlists support.** An employee with a history of consistent commitment and demonstrated progress is more likely to enlist the support of their manager and get promoted.

8. **Be flexible and realistic.** Consideration should always be given to the office workload, time available for training, office priorities, the availability of funds, and the general relevancy of the desired training to your current duties or future needs.

9. **Less Is More.** Choose the number of developmental activities that reasonably fit within your schedule. Also, activities should have some degree of challenge, but not be so difficult that they are nearly impossible to complete. Choose activities that provide a "creative tension" between where you are now in a skill and where you want to be.

10. **Who's in charge of your career? You are!** Your managers, mentors and others can support you in your development. Only you can decide which developmental activities matter most to you and find creative ways to pursue them.

Ten Ways Supervisors Can Help an Employee Develop and Implement an IDP

1. **Providing feedback on performance** in the current job and acknowledging strengths and areas for improvement in a non threatening manner.

2. **Serving** as mentors and coaches.

3. **Sharing information** about the organization's needs, goals and opportunities.

4. **Helping assess employees'** advancement potential and qualifications for other positions.

5. **Acting as a resource and referral** for exploring career development options.

6. **Supporting training and development,** providing training opportunities, and funding if related to NRC's mission and funds are available.

7. **Advising of emerging priorities** as well as changes to either the agency or office's goals and priorities.

8. **Meeting regularly** to review progress.

9. **Acting as an advocate** and searching for developmental assignments and other opportunities.

10. **Providing introductions to key agency people** that can assist with employee development.

Done	Step	Responsibility	When
☐	Print out INFORMS Form 321	Supervisor	Three months before new performance period
☐	Review form in relation to your job and your future aspirations.	Employee And (Supervisor)	Three months before new performance period
☐	Review your performance standards and jobs ob description.	Employee And (Supervisor)	Three months before new performance period
	Identify Goals		
☐	Long-term	Employee	Two months before new performance period
☐	Short-term	Employee And (Supervisor)	Two months before new performance period
☐	Create developmental objectives.	Employee	Two months before new performance period
☐	Meet to review goals and developmental objectives.	Employee And (Supervisor)	Two months before new performance period
☐	Revise goals if necessary.	Employee	Two months before new performance period
☐	Identify developmental, training, Rotations and other activities that can help you achieve your goal.	Employee	Two months before new performance period
☐	Meet to review draft plan. Discuss: • Developmental objectives & • Developmental opportunities	Employee And (Supervisor)	One month before new performance period
☐	Revise as necessary.	Employee	One month before new performance period
☐	Meet to sign IDP and submit.	Employee And (Supervisor)	One month before new performance period
☐	Implement IDP.	Employee	Beginning and throughout performance period.
☐	Support IDP implementation.	Supervisor	Throughout performance period

NRC FORM 321 U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission SAMPLE INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN	1. Employee's Name	
	2. Position Title	3. Series and Grade
	4. Organization	

5. Career Goals (Include Positions)

A. Short-Range Goals (1-2 years) – Specify positions, titles, series and grades.		B. Long-Range Goals (2-5 years) – Specify positions, titles, series and grades.	
6. Developmental Objectives	Supporting Developmental Activities	8. Supporting Formal Training	Other Activities
List the knowledge, skills and abilities you want to gain or improve.	List details, rotational assignments, on-the-job assignments, task groups, committees, etc. (Specify scheduled dates for each developmental activity.)	(Specify scheduled dates for each developmental activity.)	Include supplemental reading and other self-development activities.

SAMPLE

NRC FORM 321
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission

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CONSIDER:
Reviewing page 10 of the IDP handbook on IDENTIFYING SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM GOALS.

If you want to move up a grade, or assume a new position within the next two years, look at the grade or position requirements. Consult with your supervisor to obtain copies.

STUCK? Sometimes it is easier to identify long-range goals first, then go back and look at your short-range goals.

B. Long-Range Goals (2-5 years) – Specify positions, titles, series and grades.

Where do I want to be professionally 2 — 5 years from now?

CONSIDER:

- ❑ Checking out career literature and talking to those who do what you'd like to do some day.
- ❑ Taking time to reflect on your past positions or activities, what you liked and didn't like doing, and what you'd like do in the future.
- ❑ Contacting the NRC career counselor. To find out whether you qualify for NRC career services, contact Rhea Flanders in HR at: 301-492-2294.

6. Developmental Objectives	Supporting Developmental Activities	8. Supporting Formal Training	Other Activities
List the knowledge, skills and abilities you want to gain or improve.	List details, rotational assignments, on-the-job assignments, task groups, committees, etc. (Specify scheduled dates for each developmental activity.)	(Specify scheduled dates for each developmental activity.)	Include supplemental reading and other self-development activities.
Knowledge: What do I need to know to achieve my goals? Skills: What do I need to be able to do? Abilities: How do I need to be able to do it?	See pages 15-16 of the IDP Handbook that discusses on the job Activities that can support learning.	The cost and time allotted for any training must be approved by your supervisor. STOP	What other activities will help you achieve your objectives? Articles? Shadowing? Interviewing others?

Notes

Notes

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