

Explanation of Individual Development Plan

Overview

An Individual Development Plan (IDP) is an employee's written plan for developing the competencies [knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs)] he or she needs. The IDP is a way to organize and set priorities for learning and development experiences that will help an employee:

- Improve performance in his or her current work assignment
- Prepare for other kinds of work
- Prepare for increased responsibility

What does an IDP do for the supervisor and the employee?

An IDP gives the supervisor and the employee an opportunity to establish objectives that support both the organization's and the employee's needs and goals. The IDP gives the employee a clear guide for working toward long-term career goals, and it gives the supervisor a chance to channel the employee's efforts in ways that help an organization achieve its goals and mission.

Roles & Responsibilities

What employees should expect from a supervisor:

The supervisor's role in the IDP process is to provide information employees need to plan realistically and to guide them in identifying competencies that will help them and the organization meet goals. The supervisor will assist employees in:

- Understanding the IDP process and its purpose
- Identifying their strengths and weaknesses in performing their current work assignments
- Pinpointing areas where they could take greater responsibility
- Finding possibilities for career progress in their current jobs and work organization
- Identifying and getting access to learning resources
- Following IDP procedures and instructions

What the supervisor should expect from the employee:

Employees can reasonably expect the supervisor's help, but the supervisor can expect employees to take charge of their own learning and development and to participate actively in planning goals and how they will meet them. Specifically, the individual employee must:

- Assess his or her existing skills, competencies, and interests honestly
- Set goals and objectives that will benefit the organization as well as enhance his or her career
- Research ways of meeting personal career goals and enhancing work performance
- Draft the IDP
- Evaluate his or her own progress and keep the supervisor informed

Planning and Preparing the IDP

Step 1

The supervisor and the employee should prepare the groundwork for a realistic and worthwhile IDP. The employee's *Performance Appraisal* can be a good basis for planning development, and preparation for the IDP process should logically begin during or shortly after the appraisal interview.

The supervisor should:

- Explain the IDP process and the roles and responsibilities of the supervisor and the employee
- Review and discuss the employee's strengths and weaknesses in performing the current work assignment
- Identify and prioritize competencies required by the current work assignment and explain priorities to the employee
- Identify and prioritize learning needed to improve performance in current assignment and explain priorities to the employee
- Provide information on options for learning [your Human Resource Development (HRD) Section can help with this], such as
 - Formal training
 - On-the-job training or coaching by yourself or an expert worker
 - Job enrichment -- adding new work or increasing the employee's level of responsibility
 - Developmental assignments or details to other parts of the organization
 - Self-study, including reading
 - Activities in professional associations or societies
- Provide information on career planning and counseling resources the employee may use
- Give the employee a copy of the IDP form and instructions for completing it
- Help the employee set a deadline for completing the draft IDP

Step 2

The employee will draft a plan for working toward a career goal. (The role of the supervisor is to give advice and guidance in this step.) The employee will:

- Assess his or her existing competencies and interests
- Identify competencies he or she will plan to develop during the year
- Research and identify learning experiences that address the competencies
- Draft an IDP proposing and scheduling possible learning activities

Step 3

When the employee has completed the draft IDP, the supervisor should review it to make sure:

- The employee has identified competencies that will be useful in the organization
- Learning activities are realistic, given the organization's needs, budget, and staffing
- Learning activities are the best possible options for learning what the employee needs
- The employee has identified specific activities and schedules for each. The activities should allow the employee to continue to carry a fair share of the workload and perform it satisfactorily
- Learning activities identified in the IDP are actually available as scheduled

Caution to Supervisor: Avoid "fixing" the IDP for the employee. Identify any areas where the draft fails to meet criteria and ask the employee to correct problems or consider other options.

When the draft IDP meets criteria, the supervisor and the employee are ready for the next step.

Step 4

The supervisor and the employee work together to develop the final plan

- The supervisor and the employee meet to discuss the draft IDP and reach agreement on the employee's needs, learning experiences, and schedules
- The employee prepares the final IDP
- The supervisor reviews and approves the IDP
- The supervisor and the employee schedule meetings to check progress on the IDP

- The supervisor and the employee retain copies of the IDP

The information in IDPs may be used to respond to the organization's call for information on training needs.

Follow-up

The supervisor should keep close track of planned activities, especially when an employee is new to the organization and/or the position, and should meet with the employee regularly to go over the plan, review progress, and identify any changes.

As the year moves along, supervisors and employees must be alert for changes in the work, resources, technology, or the work environment that make it necessary to adjust IDPs. It is also logical to check each employee's IDP and progress at the time of his or her mid-year performance review, after a promotion or after an opportunity period.