

IDP (Individual Development Plan) FAQs

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1. What is an IDP?

- An IDP is an Individual Development Plan. This tool can be used to assist employees in career development. It can be used to identify and achieve short and long-term career goals, as well as improve current job performance.
- An IDP is individualized and flexible and is related to organizational needs and goals. It should be a document to monitor individual development and can be a joint effort between employees and their supervisors, coach or mentor; which can be started, adapted or revised any time.

2. How do I identify goals?

- You can work with your supervisor, mentor or the VTrans Training Team to help you initially explore what gaps, skills or knowledge you are trying to achieve. Then make them SMART goals.

3. What does SMART mean?

- **SMART** is an acronym that you can use to help when setting your goals of your IDP.

Specific - A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. To set a specific goal you must answer the six "W" questions:

Who: Who is involved?

What: What do I want to accomplish?

Where: Identify a location.

When: Establish a time frame.

Which: Identify requirements and constraints.

Why: Specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal.

EXAMPLE: A general goal would be, "Get in shape." But a specific goal would say, "Join a health club and workout three days a week."

Measurable - Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each goal you set. When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates, and experience the exhilaration of achievement that spurs you on to continued effort required to reach your goal.

To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions such as.....How much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?

Attainable - When you identify goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true. You develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach them. You begin seeing previously overlooked opportunities to bring yourself closer to the achievement of your goals.

You can attain most any goal you set when you plan your steps wisely and establish a time frame that allows you to carry out those steps. Goals that may have seemed far away and out of reach eventually move closer and become attainable. Not because your

goals shrink, but because you grow and expand to match them. When you list your goals, you build your self-image. You see yourself as worthy of these goals and develop the traits and personality that allow you to possess them.

Realistic - To be realistic, a goal must represent an objective toward which you are both willing and able to work. A goal can be both high and realistic; you are the only one who can decide just how high your goal should be. But be sure that every goal represents substantial progress. A high goal is frequently easier to reach than a low one because a low goal exerts low motivational force. Some of the hardest jobs you ever accomplished actually seem easy simply because they were a labor of love.

Your goal is probably realistic if you truly believe that it can be accomplished. Additional ways to know if your goal is realistic is to determine if you have accomplished anything similar in the past or ask yourself what conditions would have to exist to accomplish this goal.

Timely - A goal should be grounded within a time frame. With no time frame tied to it there's no sense of urgency. If you want to lose 10 lbs., when do you want to lose it by? "Someday" won't work. But if you anchor it within a timeframe, "by May 1st", then you've set your unconscious mind into motion to begin working on the goal.

T can also stand for **Tangible** - A goal is tangible when you can experience it with one of the senses, that is, taste, touch, smell, sight or hearing. When your goal is tangible you have a better chance of making it specific and measurable and thus attainable.

4. Do I need my supervisor's approval?

- To complete or create an IDP, you do not need your supervisor's approval, however your supervisor can play an important role in helping you to accomplish many of your tasks and goals you outline in your IDP. They can also work with you to help you establish goals, provide feedback or access to training and resources.

5. Does my supervisor have to be directly involved?

- The completion of your assigned tasks takes precedence over goals specified in an IDP.
- You are therefore responsible for working with your supervisors to ensure your personal goals and objectives align with the tasks that come with your position. Your supervisor can help you on a day-to-day level by assigning you tasks that promote the growth outlined in your IDP to support you reaching your goals. This is why we encourage you keeping your supervisor in the loop. A direct involvement is not required.
- VTTC staff is happy to help you navigate this.

6. Who can coach me and give advice along the way? (Who can help me if I get stuck?)

- Any number of people can assist and provide support during the development and execution of your IDP. Look to your supervisor, a mentor if you have one, the VTrans Training Center and coworkers. Ask for their input when developing your goals or they may play role in helping you to meet your goals. When in doubt, reach out to the VTrans Training Center.

7. Once the IDP is created does it become part of the employees file for future reference?

- No. This is your document and road map to your career development. However, if this is something you would like to be included in your file you can request DHR add this to your personnel file.

8. Who will have access to my IDP?

- This is your document; it is up to you who you share this with. Typically, you will want to share with those who can assist and provide support along the way. Those who may help you with your goals, objectives and keeping you on task if needed.

9. How could I use this to my benefit?

- You can share your IDP with your supervisor, future supervisors, at annual reviews. Like any development program, creating, sticking to and making SMART goals will help you to gain new knowledge, practice skills and demonstrate your willingness to grow your career.

10. When do you create an IDP?

- There is no wrong time to create an IDP. Often it can help when you are starting out in a new role, looking to enhance or develop your career path, or just stuck and need some focus and a roadmap to help you get there.

11. What if I don't meet my goal?

- The only one who will feel the effects of you not completing your IDP is you. This is your *Individual* Development Plan.

12. Does this show up in my performance evaluation?

- An IDP is not a performance review. Performance reviews focus on your achievements of past year annual goals, while an IDP focuses on your plans for leveraging strengths and talents and developing skills, knowledge, and competencies. They are two separate, but related conversations. Insight you may have from your performance review and other feedback you have received can aid your understanding of your strengths and areas for development.
- If you and your supervisor have worked to develop your IDP, or you worked with your supervisor as part of an IDP, then components such as your goals may be included. Alternatively, you could ask for your goals to be included.

13. Can I use outside resources?

- If this is something that is available to you, then yes. It could be external training, or possibly educational credits (DHR tuition reimbursement might be helpful.) Work with your supervisor, mentor or VTTC to help provide guidance. When in doubt ask – it can't hurt.

14. Does it have to be related to my job?

- An IDP is typically created to help you on your career path. However, you might want to complete an IDP that will help you personally. If you need to use work time to achieve your goals, then there should be a logical connection in your current or future work path. Work with your supervisor, mentor or VTTC to help provide guidance.

15. Once my IDP is done can I change it? How?

- Yes. An IDP is a living document. You should be reviewing this often. Look at your goals as you move forward. Ask yourself several questions. Are you achieving what you set out to do? Is the goal still relevant? Is there additional resources / people who you could work with or learn from? Is the path to your goal still relevant?

16. Can it be done on work time?

- Activities and tasks set may be completed on work time and should therefore be related to your job. The key is to work with your supervisor to establish a clear communication and expectations of time that will be needed.

17. Why should I do an IDP?

- Its primary purpose is to help employees reach short and long-term career goals, as well as improve current job performance. An IDP is not a performance evaluation tool or a one-time activity.
- It can be considered as a continuous cycle of self-reflection, recording and action. The purpose of IDP is to encourage individuals to learn to develop themselves and plan for the future by becoming more aware of their capabilities and the opportunities around them.
- IDPs are beneficial in aligning learning activities to specific competencies, AOT's mission, goals, and objectives. With goal setting at its heart, an IDP organizes your ideas into a cohesive plan that starts with short-term goals and moves to mid-range and long-term goals. You then link what you want to achieve, or the competencies you want to develop, with the activities that will help you get there.

18. How many goals should be on an IDP? (What if I have more than one goal?)

- Good rule of thumb is to keep it manageable and achievable. Develop SMART goals. Start with 1-3 goals. You can always adjust and amend as you progress. Remember this is a living document and is your roadmap.

19. Does my IDP transfer if I move to a different position/Agency?

- Yes, the IDP is your personal development plan, so it transfers with you. It will be helpful to reassess the goals outlined in the IDP to ensure a fit with the new surrounding and tasks.

20. What timeframe should the IDP cover?

- They can be used for both short-term and long-term goals. When you establish your SMART goals consider the timeframe and set it based on what makes sense for successfully achieving your goals. Long-term goals can also be broken down into multiple short-term goals to help keep you motivated and realize successes along the way.

21. Where do I find resources?

- The VTrans Training Center is always available to help you.
- Mentor
- Supervisor

Definitions

Action Learning - Learning by tackling real problems, in a group or team, and intentionally analyzing and reflecting on the actions that work and that don't work to resolve the problem as the group's work progresses.

Classroom Training - Structured learning that takes place in a classroom setting, such as the courses offered at the Learning Center. Classroom training is most effective when pursued for specific outcomes and linked to on-the-job experiences that reinforce learning and provide opportunities for practice.

Competency - Competencies are defined as the combination of knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors that contribute to individual and organizational performance.

Knowledge - Understanding which can be applied, and is developed or learned through experience, study or investigation.

Skill - An effective behavior, rooted in knowledge and ability, exercised consistently and adeptly; the result of repeated application and practice.

Ability - An innate potential to perform certain mental and physical actions or tasks.

Behavior - An observable action or reaction, what is done or said in a specific situation.

Development – Skill and knowledge attained for both personal development and career advancement; it is the process of increasing one's capabilities through engaging in learning opportunities.

Developmental Activity - Assignments, projects, community service, conferences, self-study, classes and any other actions undertaken to accomplish developmental goals. Developmental activities are intended to expand skills, build competencies, gain knowledge and enhance professional performance and effectiveness.

Development Goal - A development goal is a goal pertinent to work and career aspirations, such as mastering a skill in a current job or attaining a higher position. The goal should imply some work and challenge, but it should not be so high that it cannot be reasonably obtained. Short range goals are planned to be accomplished within 1-2 years, and long-range goals are planned to be accomplished with 3-5 years.

Experiential Learning - Learning by doing, viewed as a highly effective learning mode, which relies on simulation or practice opportunities.

Individual Development Plan (IDP) - The IDP is an individually tailored written plan initiated by the employee and supported and encouraged by the manager, outlining the employee's professional developmental goals and the specific activities for achieving these goals. An IDP is a tool for employees to fuel their professional growth, realize their potential, increase their satisfaction, and enhance their ability to contribute to the organization.

Knowledge base –The content of a particular area of expertise, field or subject.

Learning Objective - A summary of the knowledge, skills, and abilities one expects to achieve through a given activity or set of activities.

On-the-Job-Training - Training that is conducted in the work environment and is an integral part of doing the job.

Professional Aspirations - Personal goals or desires for success or progress in a given role or area of endeavor regarding one's career objectives.

Rotational Assignment - A special temporary assignment to a job or role where the individual has the opportunity to learn and develop skills beyond those usually called for by his or her regular job or role.

Shadowing - Learning by first observing the work of a qualified individual, and then practicing the application of the same skill or set of skills yourself, followed by feedback and evaluation.

Simulation Training - Learning in a realistic, but not actual situation in which the participant can practice skills before needing to apply them in a live context. Simulation training may involve the use of specialized equipment or, in some cases, scenarios and role playing.

Strength – A competency, ability or skill that is well developed and consistently applied to positive effect; an asset of special worth or utility.

Talent - A natural ability which comes easily to the individual who possesses it; an unusually high level of ability in a field or activity.