



INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN USER GUIDE

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Introduction

This developmental tool is intended for use by all NOAA Corps Officers. The Individual Development Plan (IDP) is a valuable performance enhancement and career development tool. The following information is designed to acquaint you with the purpose, goals, steps, and value of an IDP.

The supervisor and the subordinate should work together on the IDP.

Read the entire guide before you start working on your IDP.

Definition of an IDP

An IDP is a tool to help individuals reach career goals within the context of organizational objectives. It is a developmental "action" plan to move the individual from where they are to where they want to go. It provides the systematic steps to build on strengths and overcome weaknesses as individuals improve job performance and pursue career goals. It is a tool for all personnel regardless of status or performance.

The most common objectives for having an IDP are to:

- Learn new skills to improve current job performance.
- Maximize current performance in support of organizational requirements.
- Increase interest, challenges, and satisfaction in current position.
- Obtain competencies necessary for a promotion change in grade, series, or field.

An IDP is:

- A developmental partnership between the individual and supervisor. IDP preparation involves feedback, clarification, and discussion about developmental needs, goals, and plans. Supervisor-subordinate communication is key to the success of the IDP process.
- A vehicle to address the needs of the individual and the needs of the organization. The best IDPs begin with a plan to maximize current job



performance. The activities can assist the individual in meeting both personal and organizational goals for success.

- A tool to identify a person's developmental needs based on a comparison of skills required by a job and present abilities. It identifies specific competencies for which the person requires development. The mutual interests and concerns of the individual and the organization must be considered in the IDP process.
- A tool to facilitate a relationship between a mentor and a mentee.
- A broadly defined developmental plan that includes on-the-job assignments, self-development activities, and formal classroom training.
- An active and ongoing process, an IDP is a living process which encourages individual empowerment and growth.

Ideally, IDPs should be reviewed, updated, and changed as needed every six months.

An IDP is Not:

- A one-time activity.
- A performance appraisal tool. The IDP should not be used as a means to formally assess the individual's performance and should not be used for human resources decisions (e.g., promotions, etc.). It does not replace the performance evaluation form/system (OER) to determine advancements, promotion, pay, awards, etc. The purpose is professional development, not appraisal. *A person's decision not to carry out a developmental activity or achieve a goal should not impact his or her performance evaluation.* Correct use of an IDP, however, will likely improve an individual's performance and behaviors
- A contract for training. An individual should include all training interests on an IDP. However, training is not necessarily guaranteed because it is on an IDP. Training decisions are made in accordance with policy and budgetary constraints.
- A way to clarify or revise a position description. If a position description does not accurately describe the duties performed, this is a matter for the individual, supervisor, and the personnel office to resolve. An IDP does not solve this problem.
- A guarantee of promotion to a higher grade/rank. An IDP can help prepare a person to become qualified for a higher graded position, but does not imply a guarantee of promotion.
- A fix for all supervisor-personnel relations problems. The IDP is only one part of the comprehensive efforts of an organization to enhance job satisfaction and cooperative work relationships.



Steps to an IDP

There are four basic steps to creating an IDP:

Step 1: Conducting a Self-Assessment

Step 2: Meeting with your Supervisor

Step 3: Implementation

Step 4: Follow-up

Note: If you are in a mentor/mentee relationship, you should meet with your mentor before beginning your IDP so the two of you can strategize the best approach to take as you go through the “Steps to an IDP.”

Step 1: Conducting a Self-Assessment

There are different ways to assess your personality, interests, knowledge, skills, and abilities. To make completing an IDP easier, we recommend you conduct a self-assessment and then work with your supervisor and/or Officer Career Management Division to evaluate and modify this self assessment.

Conducting an Assessment of Personal Competencies

One tool for doing a self-assessment is a personal SWOT analysis. SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The following provides a frame work for performing a SWOT analysis.

- **Strengths.** Your strengths are your core competencies—those things you do well.
- **Weaknesses.** For every thing we visualize clearly or do well, there is something we can not see so clearly or do so well. What is holding you back?
- **Opportunities.** The most difficult thing about opportunity is recognizing it. What are the opportunities that you see for your future?
- **Threats.** You need to do all you can to control the threats you can predict and prepare for the ones you can not control. What outside your control could impede your growth or opportunities? What can you do to preposition yourself for dealing with those threats?

To conduct an assessment of your competencies, start by listing your knowledge, skills, and abilities. You can determine what they are by reviewing current and prior job performance evaluations, experience, training, education, and developmental activities you have. This background review provides concrete information regarding current **Strengths** and **Weaknesses**. Specifically, employees can review their training record, assignment history, awards history, service reports and any information about other developmental activities. Officers can review their



training record; performance evaluations; and any information about significant past training and developmental activities. Go to OPF Online (<https://cpc.nmao.noaa.gov/opfonline/login.jsp>); to review all history.

Once you have a basic understanding of your current knowledge, skills and abilities, you need to think about where you want to be in a year, two years, three years, etc. from now. What are your **Opportunities**? Based on the data you have generated about yourself in your self-assessment, write these desires in the form of goals. A goal is a statement of a desired outcome or accomplishment which is specific, observable and realistic. Ask yourself:

- What do I want to accomplish in the next six months?
- What do I want to accomplish by this time next year?
- What do I want to accomplish by the end of the second year?

Consider what **Threats** may interfere with pursuit of your goals.

- What barriers or obstacles might prevent me from accomplishing my goals on time (e.g., time, money, other commitments, education, training, etc.)?
- What can I do to overcome these barriers or obstacles?
- What resources are available to help me?

Conduct research pertaining to any billets, assignments, or line offices with which you desire to work. An excellent way to find information on advancement is the CPC Homepage (<http://www.noaacorps.noaa.gov/cpc/index.html>) and the Officer Career Management Division. Next, determine what knowledge, skills, and abilities you need to develop.

Draft your initial IDP following the steps in “The IDP Form”, before moving to the next steps. Doing so will enable an advisor or supervisor to better understand your individual needs and goals.

Step 2: Employee/Supervisor Meeting.

The objectives of the supervisor and individual meeting are for the supervisor to provide feedback to the individual; and to obtain a mutual commitment between the supervisor and individual regarding the IDP plan.

Before meeting with the individual, a supervisor should:

- Determine if there are competencies that need to be enhanced to improve performance in the individual’s present position.
- Be aware of training resources available.
- Be alert to organizational trends and/or planned changes that require the individual to develop different skills or enhance current skills.



The individual should provide the supervisor with a draft copy of their IDP prior to the meeting and should also bring a copy to the meeting. The supervisor needs to bring an understanding of the organization's needs and ideas or plans for developing the person to the meeting. Together they discuss:

- The individual's goals, interests, and career aspirations
- The organization's needs, expectations, and plans
- Developmental objectives for the individual on which both agree, activities that will achieve the objectives, schedule for activities, check-back points, and possible needs for revising or updating the IDP.

Together, they identify those competencies that are critical for the individual to have in order to reach professional career goals and their personal developmental needs. Also, they determine how the person can best achieve their goals.

The supervisor and individual must work together to adjust and prioritize the objectives of the person's IDP. If a developmental assignment or requested training course is not feasible, the supervisor should discuss the reasons for denial and recommend alternatives.

The individual prepares the final IDP. Both the individual and supervisor sign the IDP form indicating support of the plan. The individual keeps the original IDP and provides a copy to the supervisor.

Step 3: Implementation

The individual implements the development plan, submits training requests as appropriate, actively participates in activities, and updates the supervisor on any changes. Notification of completed training is to be forwarded to CPC for documentation in the CPC tracking system used for training, and for inclusion in the individuals Official Personnel File.

Step 4: Follow-up

The individual should routinely update and review the plan and meet with the supervisor every six months to determine progress and make changes.

The IDP Form

The following guidance will assist you in filling out the IDP form.

General Information

Provide name, unit, position title, and grade.



State Personal Goals

Goals can be written in any format you choose. Begin by writing your goal for your **current position** on page 1. Next write your **short-term** future professional development goals on page 2. (Your current position goal and your short-term goal can be the same. If they are the same, there is no need to duplicate your work by listing them in both sections.) Short-term goals are generally actions you want to achieve within the next one to two years. Finally, write your **long-term** future professional development goals on page 3. Long-term goals are generally actions you want to accomplish within three or more years. Goals can be written in any format you choose. You can specify a rank, position, or series (e.g., Lieutenant, Commanding Officer), or simply a new qualification, skill, title, or role. The more specific the plan, the better you can identify developmental activities that can help you reach your goal.

Identify Competencies to be Developed

Identify those competencies (knowledge, skills, and abilities) that you want to develop for each of your goals. You may also determine which areas need development with input from your supervisor. Also, refer to the research you did in your assessment to identify the competencies you will need for your short-term and long-term professional goals. Identify those competencies that are critical for you to have in order to reach professional career goals and your personal developmental needs. With input from your supervisor, determine which areas will best help you reach your goals.

List Developmental Activities or Actions to be Taken

Identify a developmental activity for each targeted competency. Explore a broad range of developmental activities. Examples of activities beyond traditional training are included on page 8. *Note:* All formal classroom training should have the source (e.g., USDA) identified. For all activities, indicate the intended completion date.

List Outcomes Desired

Identify what outcome you desire to achieve by obtaining that competency. For example, if a competency you desire is to develop your oral communication skills, your desired outcome may be that you can effectively communicate with others on your work team.



List Intended Completion Date

List the date that you want the competency to be completed by. This date does not have to be permanent, but should be a strong approximation to when you wish it to be completed.

List Cost

Identify the cost of completing the competency (e.g., the cost of the course and travel).

List Outcomes-Results

Identify the outcome that actually occurred from using the IDP. Reflect on what worked and what did not work with your IDP. For example look back and review and reflect on each step. Did this developmental activity occur? If yes, when did it happen, and how close did it match the plan? If not, why didn't it happen? What leadership lessons did you learn? What did you accomplish? What worked? What didn't work? Take these results and use them when establishing a future IDP.

Signatures

Both you and your supervisor need to sign and date your IDP.

Resources

Who can help?

The NOAA Corps has a variety of advisors in place to assist you with career information and/or planning. The knowledge and services of these personnel will vary depending on their job/role and their individual experience. You may have to work with several advisors to get the assistance you need.

Chief, Officer Career Management Division

The Officer Career Management Division is located at Commissioned Personnel Center, Silver Spring, MD. The Officer Career Management Division can assist you with career planning, professional development, educational development, and leadership development. They provide unit-wide and individual career development, as well as information pertaining to careers. The Chief, Officer Career Management Division, is trained in how to develop an IDP.



Developmental Activities

Remember, education and training are important but **learning** is paramount. Job, career, and personal development involve more than formal classroom training. Individuals are more likely to retain what they learn when actively applying the skill versus learning about it in a classroom. When preparing your IDP, consider all learning activities and assignments that are available to you. Possible activities beyond traditional training include:

Types of Activities

Developmental Assignments - A temporary assignment to another position, work unit, branch, division, or office designed to meet the participant's learning objectives. For example, to enhance writing skills and the ability to work as a team member, a person may request assignment to a task force organized to create a handbook describing a new program.

"Acting" Assignments - Temporary assignment of oversight responsibilities to an individual. In most cases, these responsibilities are to cover for a manager or supervisor that is out of the office.

Shadow Assignments – The opportunity to accompany a technical expert or senior leader for a brief period to better understand the type of work being performed. For example, "shadowing" a civil rights specialist may increase one's knowledge of affirmative action plans and programs.

Special Projects - Work of infrequent nature given to an individual whose normal range of duties would not include that assignment. For example, to enhance planning skills, the individual may be asked to participate in developing a schedule, organizing a meeting/conference, etc.

Collateral Duties - Assignment of duties outside an individual's normal range of responsibilities that provide a broadening experience. For example, a person may be assigned space planning responsibilities in order to enhance analytical and reporting skills.

Job Redesign - Assignment of new responsibilities to a position for the purpose of utilizing an individual's natural abilities or interests. For example, assigning liaison responsibilities to an individual who would otherwise not deal with people outside their immediate work unit.

Committee/Task Force Participation - Involvement in workforce groups or special emphasis groups. For example, participation in Human Relations Committees.

Professional Organizations – Joining and/or volunteering with these organizations offers opportunities for the individual to develop a variety of organizational and



leadership skills. Examples include, American Society of Military Comptrollers, American Society of Training and Development, Reserve Officer Association, etc.

Learning Groups - Groups arranged with co-workers (to take place during lunch or after duty hours) for the purpose of gathering individuals who meet to focus on their learning and development in a particular interest area such as information technology, public speaking, career paths, etc.

Other Options

You can also read articles and books (recommended Leadership Reading on CPC Website), volunteer, do some research, interview senior/technical people, ask a co-worker to teach you a skill, train someone else, etc.

Where to find NOAA Corps Training Information

Look for internal NOAA Corps training information on the CPC Website through the Training section. This website lists a variety of forums in which both classroom and practical on the job training can be developed.

Where to Find Career and Professional Development Information

Contact the Chief, Officer Career Management Division, to discuss more options for both the immediate future and the long term. Discuss your present IDP and develop and reevaluate the IDP to see if it still meets the goals that you set when your IDP was created. Then go back to your supervisors to examine any changes that you might want to be made.

Research the information on the Career Management section on the CPC website. Examine evaluation forms and what criteria are used for evaluation. Stay updated on progress of the Officer Assignment Board (through CPC website) and examine which billets will be coming up in the future. Research billets that are of interest and insure goals on the IDP match the competencies required for the fulfillment of that billet.

