

**Civilian Human Resources Agency, Europe
Human Resource Development Division (HRDD)
Kaiserslautern Germany**

How to Construct Individual Development Plans (IDP)

This course is a part of the Civilian Personnel Regional Training Program. Please contact our office at DSN 483-5839 to schedule classes, obtain permission to use the material, or to discuss the program.

Individual Development Plan (IDP) Guide

We face mission and management challenges that call for a new responsiveness to training development that support organizational priorities and facilitates professional growth. Managers and supervisors should be fully responsive to this challenge and place a high priority on ensuring that the training and developmental activities of all employees are carefully planned and aligned with the mission and needs of their organization.

This guide is designed to lead supervisors and employees through the Individual Development Plan (IDP) process. IDP planning is a collaborative process between employees and their supervisors. This process is designed to assess the needs of both the organization and employees, and focus on building skills that support the accomplishment of our important mission. All of us bring unique talents to the organization and the IDP planning process should reflect that diversity.

Table of Contents

Individual Development Plan Process Overview	3
<u>Step One</u> : Determine Developmental Objectives	4
<u>Step Two</u> : Explore Development Options and Select Options	4
- Supervisor's Preparation for Discussion	6
- Employee's Preparation for Discussion	6
<u>Step Three</u> : Prepare IDP and Hold Development Discussion	7
<u>Step Four</u> : Take Action and Monitor Progress	7
Frequently Asked Questions about Individual Development Plans	7
Training Sources	9

INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN GUIDE

The Individual Training Plan (IDP) process provides an opportunity for supervisors and employees to identify training and development needs in order to ensure job and organizational success. An individual development plan is a written schedule or plan designed to meet particular goals for development that are aligned with the organization's strategic plan and action plan. The development of an IDP, which outlines developmental objectives along with activities to achieve the objectives, will afford employees an opportunity to develop skills.

The IDP and developmental objectives processes are inherently connected to, and should be completed in conjunction with, an employee's annual performance appraisal and development of new performance standards and elements. IDPs are used to plan developmental experiences (details, course work, special projects, on-the-job training, education, career development, etc.) which may change from year to year as the mission of the organization evolves.

The IDP is not a binding contract. While every effort should be made by both employees and supervisors to adhere to the plan, circumstances sometimes arise that require modifying the IDP. Completing an IDP does not imply promotion; it is intended to address developmental needs and facilitate growth while preparing the organization for future challenges. This guide was prepared to explain IDPs: how to prepare them, how to use them, and what to expect from them.

The IDP process is a four-step process that involves continuous two-way communication between supervisors and employees.

Step One: Determine Developmental Objectives

Step Two: Explore Development Options and Select Activities

- Supervisor's Preparation for Discussion
- Employee's Preparation for Discussion

Step Three: Prepare IDP and Hold Development Discussion

Step Four: Take Action and Monitor Progress

STEP ONE. DETERMINE DEVELOPMENTAL OBJECTIVES

The first step in establishing an individual's one year career development plan is to outline goals and objectives before adding to other categories of the IDP. Objectives should reflect overall broad career goals and specific development activities intended to accomplish them. The career goals should identify types of future positions desired, experience and training in other career fields, other education goals such as advanced degrees or a combination of all these. The developmental objectives should be attainable in reasonable time frames and should be job related. These goals must be measurable and achievable over a specified period of time. They can include such items as functional training, leadership education, professional activities and assignment experience that can lead toward the overall achievement of the broad career goals

A developmental objective might be: Develop in-depth knowledge of the MS Word software.

In this example, a secretary has been working for a commander for several years and understands his or her priorities. However, the office has recently installed a new software package, in MS Word, that she has never used before and she needs to learn that program.

STEP 2. EXPLORE DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS AND SELECT OPTIONS

There are many different types of developmental activities; formal training is only one option and many times not the best option. The following is a list of various types of developmental options. It is not all-inclusive.

- *On-the-Job Training* - Structured training in which learning objectives are achieved while in the work environment and while completing work tasks.
- *Classroom Training* - Structured formal instruction presented in a classroom environment by a qualified instructor.
- *Self-Study Courses* - Courses you complete at your own pace, e.g., correspondence courses, computer based courses, etc. May or may not be completed during the regular work day.
- *After-Hours Courses* - Generally college-level courses taken outside the normal work day.
- *Shadowing* - Opportunity to observe an individual who has demonstrated successful work strategies.

- *Discussions with Subject Matter Experts* - A structured question and answer session with a subject matter expert. May be used to explore career opportunities or to learn specific tasks.
- *Rotational Assignments* - Short-term work assignments appropriate for the important skills identified in the developmental objective. This may be accomplished through a formal detail.
- *Developmental Assignment* - Work assignments that challenge the employee to develop and use new knowledge, skills and abilities within the current position.
- *Reading* - Selected books and articles to increase understanding of a specific topic.
- *Development of Job Aids* - Development of job aids to assist in the training of other employees. First learn the task completely before attempting to teach other employees.
- *Participation on Task Force Committee or Team* - Short-or long-term assignment that affords the opportunity to develop new skills.

When selecting the **method of accomplishment** for the developmental objectives, the following criteria may help identify the best methodology for your specific needs.

- Will the method of accomplishment contribute to the developmental objective? How?
- What are the direct and indirect costs associated with the activity?
- Is the developmental activity easily achievable?

Estimate the projected cost and calculate the resources needed to achieve your developmental objectives. Resources include time, moral support and financial investment and anything else that you need to accomplish your goals. By assessing abilities, how much work is involved, the attainability of a particular objective, and a willingness to take on the work, identified goals are more likely to be achieved.

Supervisor's Preparation For Discussion

In preparation for discussion, reflect back to Step 1 - Determine Developmental Objectives and Step 2 - Explore Development Options and Select Options. Consider the job and standards for doing the job, particularly the job description and performance appraisal.

Consider the organization's needs over the next several years to include strategic plans, mission changes, changes in technology, expected turnover, staffing needs, program plans, and future needs for particular skills.

After projecting the organization's needs, the assessment should focus on indicators such as formal training, on-the-job-training, developmental assignments, special assignments, educational/academic courses and membership on teams/task forces.

Project short-and-long term developmental objectives and rough ideas of the training and experience needed to achieve the objectives.

Supervisor-Employee Discussion

The discussion is an opportunity for the supervisor and employee to review plans for achieving developmental objectives while considering career goals and the organization's particular needs. As a result of the discussion, the supervisor and employee will develop an IDP.

Employee's Preparation For Discussion

The employee should complete Step 1 - Determine Developmental Objectives and Step 2 - Explore Developmental Options and Select Options and have rough ideas about a draft IDP. This discussion should be informal and frank. If it looks like one of the activities or courses is impossible, supervisors can explain the reason. One of the purposes of the discussion is to find out what constraints management is under from budget, policy, or time standpoints.

The employee must be prepared to support identified developmental objectives and training, education, or assignments. The IDP discussion is not a performance appraisal. Performance appraisals focus on the past while IDPs focus on the future. IDPs foster developing as much as possible in current work or future work. That development should be the topic of discussion.

STEP 3. PREPARE IDP AND HOLD DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSION

Once the IDP is completed, a more formal meeting should occur. The objective of the development discussion is to review objectives and training and modify the IDP as necessary. A meeting should be scheduled in a neutral place such as a conference room to discuss the IDP. The employee should be prepared to discuss the developmental objectives and any formal training, on-the-job training, educational courses, or developmental assignments. Actively listen, clarify for understanding and ask "how will the organization benefit from this developmental objective.

STEP 4. TAKE ACTION AND MONITOR PROGRESS

Once supervisors and employees agree on the IDP, by signing and dating the form, an action plan must be developed. If developmental assignments are to be completed, an action plan must be developed. When non-government training/tuition assistance is required for educational/academic courses, consult your supervisor/commander. Ensure the course is job related and not solely for the purpose of obtaining a degree.

The IDP process is an on-going, continuous process of growth and development. The IDP should be periodically reassessed to determine its effectiveness in terms of developmental objectives, methods of accomplishment, and the need to update. At a minimum, an IDP should be reviewed semi-annually.

Frequently Asked Questions About Individual Development Plans

Question: I am interested in attending a three-day training course I just found out about. It is not in my IDP. Can I still go?

Answer: The IDP attempts to identify all of your annual developmental objectives and training, but sometimes other options become available after you have prepared your IDP. Obtain your supervisor's support and approval for the course. Handwritten annotations and changes can then be made to the IDP.

Question: I am satisfied with my current job, don't think I need any further training, and am not interested in moving into any other position. What can an IDP do for me?

Answer: Because "individual development" does not just mean finding another job or a promotion, the IDP can be concerned with your growth in your current job-mastery of skills or learning different facets of the job. Employees planning to stay in their jobs still must work at keeping skills current, remaining productive,

and being successful. Quite a few jobs will not look the same in two years. Requirements are constantly changing, and it is critical to be current, if not ahead of the change.

Question: I am not interested in career development now. I do not want to take the time to identify objectives and training needs. Can I decide not to prepare an IDP this year?

Answer: There is no mandatory requirement for an IDP except for career intern positions, and VRA employees. Some commanders have made it mandatory for all employees to have an IDP. Supervisors should provide employees the opportunity to have a new or revised IDP in place each year. Organizations can work with employees to develop IDPs that address mission-related training needs as well as career development objectives.

Question: I will be retiring next year, how would I benefit from having an IDP?

Answer: There are a number of benefits that could derive from having an IDP in place even though you do not plan to continue much longer in your federal career. While the IDP can be designed to extend past a year, performance priorities are usually focused on a shorter period of time, and the IDP process provides a tool for supervisors and employees to reach agreement on developmental objectives and training/education needs in the short as well as longer term. Also, you might find it beneficial to share your knowledge and expertise with your colleagues in the form of a mentoring relationship so there might be minimal "brain drain" when you retire. You might also benefit from gaining exposure to or refreshing your skills in areas which will enhance your job proficiency while still working and which you will be able to use after retirement.

Question: Where can I get more information and guidance on the IDP process?

Answer: Civilian Human Resource Agency, Europe, Human Resource Development Division (HRDD).

Training Resources

- The Army Civilian Training, Education, and Development System (ACTEDS) Training Catalog
<http://cpol.army.mil/library/train/catalog/>
- The Army Civilian Training, Education, and Development System (ACTEDS) Career Training Plans
<http://cpol.army.mil/library/train/acteds/>
- The Army Correspondence Course Program (ACCP)
<http://www.armycorrespondencecoursesprogram.com/correspondence-courses-army-self-development/>
- Army E-Learning web-base courses
<https://www.atrrs.army.mil/selfdevctr/eLearningWelcome.aspx>
- Defense Acquisition University Courses
<https://www.atrrs.army.mil/channels/aitas/main.asp>
- Reimer's Training and Doctrine Digital Library
<http://www.adtdl.army.mil/>
- Army Training Requirements and Resources System (ATRRS)
<https://www.atrrs.army.mil/>
- Civilian Human Resources Agency (CHRA), Training Management Division (TMD)
<http://www.chra.army.mil/hr/divisions/tmd/default.asp>