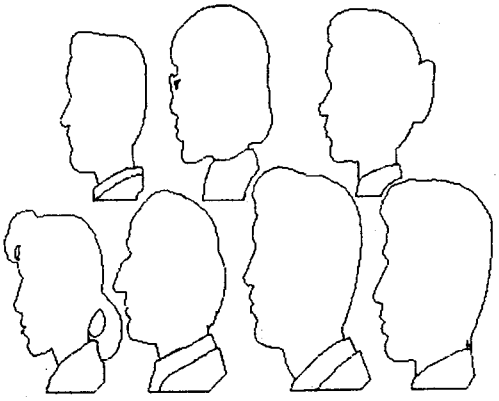
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

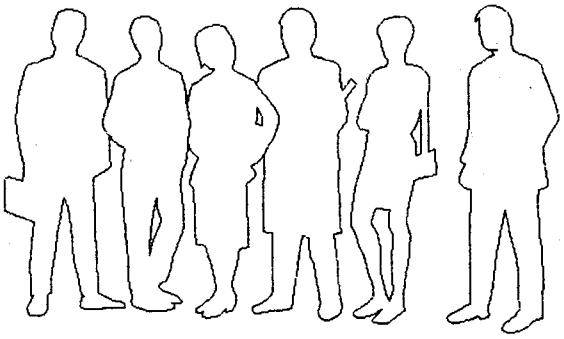
AN

EMPLOYEE GUIDE

TO

INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS





OFFICE OF PERSONNEL AND TRAINING
TRAINING AND EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

PREFACE

This brochure is an outgrowth of questions directed to the Training and Executive Development Division from Federal Highway Administration supervisors and employees about career development and career planning. It attempts to answer some of the questions often asked of supervisors by employees about getting ahead, changing careers, taking on greater job responsibilities, negotiating their own career paths, or finding the "secret" of their success.

All the answers to the questions are not found in this brochure. However, this brochure does contain information that will help you ask the right questions, and begin to look at your career and career interests in the context of your own life experiences.

This brochure will also help your supervisor begin to plan for the discussions with you after you have read through the brochure and have decided to lay out an individual development plan (IDP). If you decide to draw up an IDP, both you and your supervisor should work together to do so. Even if you decide not to develop an IDP, the information in this brochure will still be of use to you in any general counseling session with your supervisor on career development and career planning.

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INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS (IDP)

OVERVIEW

The Federal Highway Administration has always placed great emphasis on the training and career development of its employees. Most evident are the various career training programs which the agency supports and recruits for on an annual basis. Other resources include the academic study program and central and local training.

To continue to improve job performance and promote individual development, employees and supervisors should work together to identify specific employee development needs and determine how to meet these needs. IDP's are tools which can aid in formulating and clarifying the developmental needs of employees and form a base for discussion with the supervisor. Attached to this brochure is a sample IDP which can be used to document employee goals and supervisory discussions. Instructions for its use are included. Additional and more detailed information on the use of IDP's is included in this package.

Bear in mind that the IDP will be most effective when developmental opportunities:

(1) Are based on present and projected organizational needs.

(2) Build on employee skills, interests, and career objectives.

(3) Represent the best possible integration of individual and organizational objectives.

Participation is **optional**, however, supervisors must allow employees who want IDS's to prepare them. When electing to develop an IDP, employees and supervisors should keep the following points in mind:

(1) The primary responsibility for individual development rests with the employee. The IDP is designed to encourage and assist employees in this process.

(2) Supervisors are responsible for assisting employees in developing and utilizing their skills and capabilities in the accomplishment of the agency's mission.

(3) The IDP should focus initially on learning and mastering current job demands. Performance of current duties should be at a high level before objectives are set to broaden the employee's capabilities for a new position.

(4) The IDP may include on-the-job experience as well as formal training. A temporary assignment to a project, committee, task group, etc., may be more appropriate or valuable than a formal class of instruction.

(5) FHWA encourages self-development by supporting a wide variety of training activities. However, training is not a right to which employees are automatically entitled. Employees must demonstrate initiative, motivation, and potential for development, or an identifiable training need before training will be approved. Selection for training is based upon the relationship of the training to the performance of official duties; the needs of the organization and the individual; workload; and the budget and staffing limitations of the operating unit.

(6) Participation in the preparation of an IDP does not guarantee, or even imply, a promotion. Development may, however, enhance an employee's qualifications.

(7) An IDP is a planning service; a road map; a systematic plan for reaching a goal; **it is not a contract**. It indicates a commitment by employees and supervisors to work together to complete objectives of the plan. As with any plan, the IDP may be revised to accommodate changing requirements and changing workload.

(8) Development of an IDP should be a carefully thought-out process. Supervisors and employees should thoroughly discuss development needs and opportunities before establishing development plans. Employees should consider where they are, where they hope to be, and where they fit into the future needs of their office and to the agency as a whole.

WHAT IS AN INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN?

An individual development plan (IDP) is a road map, a written schedule, a systematic plan for reaching a career goal. It is a timetable that answers the question, "How do I get from here to there?" Rather than spending time and money on things which may or may not be useful, the IDP gives both you and your supervisor the opportunity to set objectives and plan only those activities which will support those objectives. The IDP can have different formats, but essentially it will contain the following:

Formally Stated Objectives
Specific Actions and Activities to Reach the Objectives
A Target Date for Completing the Developmental Activity

The IDP is realistic because the process includes both the supervisor's and the employee's perspectives, and the employee's goals are considered as far as they are feasible within the agency. The employee has a chance to get information and feedback so that goals that are set are reasonably achievable.

IDP's can be used to plan training and related developmental experiences (details, special projects, on-the-job training, etc.). The IDP can change from year to year, but the prime purpose is to help employees: help them set up reasonable goals, assess their particular strengths, and chart where they can best contribute and grow.

This brochure was prepared to explain IDP's: how to develop them, how to use them and what you can expect from them.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

An Individual Development Plan should be completed by the first level supervisor and the employee. Supervisors and employees should review and discuss the mission and function of the organization, employee objectives and interests, current job requirements, and projected job requirements in developing a plan. Useful sources to refer to are job descriptions, statements of organizational objectives, employee performance appraisals, FHWA core curricula for certain fields, etc. This review should provide the necessary background information to identify employee development needs and determine how to meet these needs. The Training and Executive Development Division and your servicing Personnel Office staff are available to assist you in this process.

An IDP may be developed at any time. Some supervisors and employees may prefer to discuss employee development during the employee performance appraisal session while others may prefer a separate time. Ideally, an IDP is prepared and updated on a yearly basis.

WHERE DOES THE PROCESS BEGIN?

The process starts with you. You first must determine what it is you want and why it is that you want an IDP. IDP's can be formulated to achieve different goals:

--To improve current job performance;

--To reach maximum performance within a current career ladder;

--To reach career goals outside the current position;

--To increase satisfaction in the current job.

THEN CONSIDER:

1. Influences that shape your life -- such as health, education, age, etc.

2. Personal Realities -- such as financial needs, family responsibilities, etc.

3. Skills and Abilities:

SKILLS: THAT WHICH YOU HAVE LEARNED TO DO -- SUCH AS:

a. Public Speaking
b. Bookkeeping
c. Shorthand
d. Math

ABILITIES: Natural Abilities

a. Planning Abilities
b. Analytical Mind
c. Logical Mind
d. Coordinating Abilities

4. Your present position: what things you do well; what needs improvement.

5. Selecting a career goal:

a. Explore strengths
b. Identify interests and aspirations
c. Evaluate your experience
d. Examine your aptitudes
e. Examine positions available

Having looked at the above considerations, now you are ready to begin to work up your IDP.

BEGIN THE PROCESS

The IDP is for you. It is for you to chart and plan your own individual development over the next several years. According to your goals and how they fit into the plans and programs within the agency, the IDP will be your road map to realistically identify specific training and experiences necessary to help you achieve your goals and help you do a better job where you are now.

The IDP involves your supervisors and also the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). In preparing the IDP and discussing it with your supervisor, you provide an opportunity for your supervisor to find out about your goals and how you see yourself within the FHWA. It also implies a responsibility on your supervisor's part. For in order for you to get a true picture of your possibilities in the FHWA, you need information about the FHWA's long- and short-range plans, its staffing needs, its need for particular skills, and what career ladders exist or are planned. You also need feedback on your strengths and weaknesses and the feasibility of your goal(s).

Typically, the process will take these steps:

EMPLOYEE PREPARATION:

You will prepare to meet with your supervisor and talk about your IDP. To help you get started, it is recommended that you ask yourself some of the questions that appear in the section "QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU GET STARTED ON YOUR IDP", and then do the following:

1. List your short-range goals. (Goals you wish to attain within the next year or so.) Based on these goals, you should make a list of the particular knowledges, skills and abilities (KSA's) you need to accomplish these goals. How to set goals and identify KSA's is explained elsewhere in this brochure.

2. Write down your long-range goals (things which will take 2-5 years to accomplish.) After you have set your long-range goals, you should identify a list of KSA's necessary to accomplish the long-range goals.

3. Based upon what you have for short and long-range goals, and the questions you have asked yourself, you should have a fair idea of where your strengths lay, in terms of your KSA's. Make a list of the strengths, being careful to be fair to yourself, and especially noting your strongest KSA's. Pay attention to how these strengths relate to your goals.

4. Having listed your goals and your strengths, next you should list your weaknesses, in terms of the KSA's you don't have or need to work on. Be honest with yourself and, to the extent possible, include all of the areas in which you are deficient.

5. Next look at your short- and long-range goals, the KSA's needed to carry out these goals, and your own strengths and weaknesses. Are there any KSA's that you are weak in or that you lack? This is the basis of your IDP. Your IDP will outline how you will get the KSA's to help you reach your goals.

6. As a final step, write down the KSA's you need in priority order, and list what training and experience you think will give you the KSA's. Include both "formal training" (courses) and "developmental assignments" (on-the-job training, details, taskforces, projects, self-study, etc.). Your list does not have to be comprehensive at this point, because you will be meeting with your supervisor and will be further discussing your varied experience and training. Remember this is a preliminary plan which you will use to begin the discussion with your supervisor.

NOW YOU ARE READY FOR THE EMPLOYEE-SUPERVISOR DISCUSSION.

SUPERVISOR'S PREPARATION:

While you are thinking about your IDP, your supervisor will also be preparing for the discussion. In your meeting with the supervisor, the following areas will be touched upon:

1. Your supervisor will consider your current job and the standards for doing that job. Those KSA's deemed most necessary for performing the job well will be discussed, and also your own particular strengths and weaknesses relating to the KSA's.

2. Your supervisor will consider the FHWA's particular organizational needs over the next several years. Mission changes, changes in technology, expected turnover, staffing needs, program plans, and future needs for particular skills are items which the supervisor will factor into the discussion.

3. After arriving at projected needs, your supervisor will consider your overall potential to meet these needs- your potential to take on either different responsibilities or higher-level responsibilities.

4. Based on all of these considerations, your supervisor will come up with some short-range and long-range projected goals for you and a rough idea of training and experience which will help you to reach your goals.

EMPLOYEE-SUPERVISOR DISCUSSION:

The discussion is the chance for both you and your supervisor to work out plans for achieving goals which relate to your own personal concerns and the FHWA's particular needs. After this discussion, the two of you should be able to draw up a final IDP -- one based on a frank and honest discussion of strengths and weaknesses and realistic and achievable goals.

The IDP, which should be planned for one year at a time, is then implemented, and you will begin your individual plan to develop particular knowledges, skills, and abilities to meet your goals.

SELF ASSESSMENT

QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU GET STARTED ON YOUR IDP

Preparing an IDP and deciding on what's most important to you can be difficult. By asking yourself the questions below, you should be able to arrive at some realistic goals. Answering the questions should help you go from looking at the work you do now to the work you want to do at the end of your goal.

These questions will help you get started on your IDP. You can use them along with the guidance in the sections, "Where Does the Process Begin?" and "Begin the Process." You do not have to write all of the questions down or show them to anyone. However, taking the questions one by one and in order may help you build up the data to see where you are now, where you can realistically go, and how you can get there.

First take out your position description and read it. Think about the work you have done over the last year and your past performance appraisals, and answer the following:

1. What assignments did I like doing in the past year?
2. What assignments did I not like?
3. What parts of my job am I good at doing? What work in general am I good at doing?
4. Where are my weaknesses? Did these weaknesses hinder my getting my job done well?
5. What kinds of assignments would I like to have this year? Is there any different or new work I might like to get into?
   STATE YOUR IMMEDIATE SHORT-RANGE (1 YEAR) GOALS.
6. What work would I <u>not</u> like to be assigned to this year, if possible?
7. What skills or knowledges are necessary to do the work I'd like to do?
8. Do I have these skills/knowledges already? How strong or weak am I in these areas?
9. What kinds of training or experience would I need to develop in these areas? How extensive would the training have to be?
10. Is it feasible for me to develop these skills?
    GO BACK TO QUESTION #5. LOOK AT YOUR SHORT-RANGE GOALS. DOUBLE CHECK TO BE SURE THAT THEY ARE REALISTIC AND ATTAINABLE.
11. Now consider the career ladders within the FHWA; in your immediate branch or division or in the larger organization. Do I understand them? Will my goals help me to advance along the career ladder in which I am interested?
12. Keeping in mind your strengths (#3) and weaknesses (#4), job opportunities in your organization, and the work you like, STATE YOUR LONG-RANGE GOALS (2-5 years).

13. What skills/knowledges are necessary to do the work defined in my long-range goals?
14. Which of these skills and knowledges do I already have? How much do I have?
15. What kinds of training/experience do I need to develop these skills? How much? How long will it take?
16. Is it feasible for me to develop these skills? GO BACK TO #12.
    LOOK AT YOUR LONG-RANGE GOALS. DOUBLE CHECK. ARE THEY REALISTIC? PLAN A COURSE OF ACTION.

Refer to these questions every time you prepare an IDP. The planning will help assure that the developmental efforts you take on will be worthwhile to you and the FHWA.

HOW TO IDENTIFY KNOWLEDGES, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES

The IDP Form #1 has blocks for "developmental objectives." These are objectives you have for developing certain knowledges, skills, and abilities (KSA's) in order to reach a goal.

Throughout the discussion of the IDP process, the importance of putting objectives (and also your strengths and weaknesses) in terms of KSA's, has been stressed. Describing your developmental objectives as KSA's is important because with KSA's you have something concrete to deal with - something clear and non-personality-oriented on which you can base a plan of action. Once KSA's are identified, even in rough form, you are in a good position to decide on just the right combination of formal courses and alternative training methods to help you get the KSA's you need.

Picking out important KSA's does not have to be complicated. Starting with your goal, e.g., to became a project leader, you can get to the KSA's in this way:

1. Briefly, jot down the basic duties or tasks involved in being a project leader	- Planning new projects - Negotiating - Guiding team members - Doing the most complex technical work - Writing technical reports
2. Pick out one duty or task at a time	- Writing technical reports
3. For that one duty or task, (e.g., writing technical reports) write down whatever knowledges, skills or abilities are important to doing the work, Ask: What would someone new to this task have to do it? What would that new person have to learn?	- Ability to analyze data and form conclusions - Ability to express oneself in a clear and logical manner - Knowledge of a substantive technical area - Skill in writing clearly - Knowledge of the agency's technical reporting requirements

4. Decide which KSA's you already have that are needed to reach goal. Eliminate them. (You do not need more training in them.)	
5. Of the KSA's left, how important are they to the task? Rank them. Write those <u>Most needed</u> KSA's under "developmental objectives" on the IDP form.	- Skill in writing clearly - Knowledge of agency's reporting requirements
6. Describe the appropriate formal training and developmental assignments for each knowledge, skill, and ability needed.	- Writing Seminar, August, 1991 - Assigned Project report under guidance of team leader - Self-study: FHWA's reporting regulations

ON-THE-JOB TRAINING, DEVELOPMENTAL ASSIGNMENTS, AND ALTERNATIVE TRAINING.

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

Although classroom training is probably the most obvious form of job development, there are other methods through which employees can be provided opportunities for career growth. All learning experiences do not have to occur in a "formal classroom" in order for them to have validity. It may be undesirable to totally devote your career development to formal classroom situations, considering the time constraints that the classroom poses, as well as the lack of variety that would exist. In addition, the budget constraints of the agency, if you are assuming that your classes would be funded that way, could place a crimp in your plans to obtain formal classroom training on a regular and recurring basis. As there are other ways that people can learn outside of a formal classroom, it is wise to look at alternative means of acquiring the knowledge or skills you need to progress.

Many of the methods listed below are some of the more common ways of providing alternative developmental assignments for employees and many are within the scope of activities which can be approved by your supervisor.

OJT (On-the job Training)	Accepting responsibility for parts of the supervisor's own job; e.g. management of a project, the preparation of a budget, coordination of a survey; acting in the absence of the supervisor or representing the supervisor at meetings; and formally outlined work assignments designed to provide employee with a wide range of skills over the course of time (usually a specified time frame).
DETAILS OR ROTATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS	An assignment to other offices for period of time to work in another setting and possibly learn new skills and perform new tasks. May also involved assignments in other agencies, but are more difficult to get approved. May be for periods of 30 to 120 days or longer (with special approval).
SELF-STUDY	Arranging to get information about a body of knowledge through a series of readings and assignments

	and perhaps video tapes on the subject. Useful if you have someone who can outline a program of selected readings and also offer to check your progress. For further information about programmed self-instruction contact the Office of Personnel and Training, Training and Executive Development Division.
CORRESPONDENCE COURSES	A more formal way of doing self-study. Usually involves totally independent and complete study by correspondence in sequential units of instruction. Such courses contain practical exercises and written examinations. These courses may be paid for by the agency if job relevant. Contact your local training officer for further information.
SPECIAL PROJECT ASSIGNMENTS	Not unlike the OJT ,details or rotational assignments. However, may be of short duration, but provide you with opportunity to learn a new skill or demonstrate your skills in an area not normally a part of your current duties. Could be an ad hoc project or a Professional Exchange Program PEP assignment.
WORKSHOPS; LECTURES; CONFERENCES; SEMINARS.	Attendance at these types of activities are very valuable for keeping up to date on the newest technology, getting information about areas in which you have an interest, and just learning what's new.

Once you have narrowed your goals and the needed KSA's, determine how many of the KSA's can be gained by way of alternative "developmental assignments." Structure the mix of your alternative methods of learning so that the widest range of opportunities is made available and you can maximize your learning. You may surprise yourself and find many excellent training opportunities in unexpected places.

IDP FORM

Either version of this form
may be used, as is, or may be
adapted to whatever word processing
format meets your needs.

INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN		
1. EMPLOYEE: (Name and SSN)	2. CURRENT POSITION AND GRADE	3. ORGANIZATION
4. DESCRIBE SHORT TERM CAREER GOALS (DURING THE NEXT 12 MONTHS):		
5. DEVELOPMENTAL OBJECTIVES	6. DEVELOPMENTAL ASSIGNMENTS*	
7. FORMAL TRAINING AND OTHER ACTIVITIES*		
8. REMARKS		

9. DESCRIBE LONG TERM CAREER GOALS (OVER THE NEXT FIVE (5) YEARS):	
10. DEVELOPMENTAL OBJECTIVES	11. DEVELOPMENTAL ASSIGNMENTS (CITE BEST INFORMATION AVAILABLE)
12. FORMAL TRAINING AND OTHER ACTIVITIES*	
13. ROTATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS DURING THE NEXT 12 MONTHS CHECK APPROPRIATE BOXES: [ ] A. ROTATIONAL ASSIGNMENT PLANNED (INDICATE WHERE IN 6. ABOVE) [ ] B. ROTATIONAL ASSIGNMENT NOT PLANNED [ ] C. ROTATIONAL ASSIGNMENT COMPLETED	
14. REMARKS	

15. EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE	DATE	16. SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE	DATE

*Include scheduled date(s)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING IDP

This IDP form has been designed to help you realistically set down specific training and experience to assist you achieve your goals and to help you do a better job where yon are now.

1, 2, & 3 are self-explanatory.

4. Describe the career goals you want to attain within the next year.

5. List the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's) needed to carry out your goals. Ask yourself "Are there any KSA's that I am weak in or that I lack?' This is the basis of your IDP. Your IDP will outline how you will get the necessary KSA's to enable you to reach your goals.

6. This portion should be discussed between the employee and the supervisor. Developmental assignments are assignments in areas which will provide the knowledge and skills necessary for the employee's goals. This may be accomplished through details, task force assignments, on-the-job training, special projects, rotational assignments, etc.

7. List FHWA, interagency, non-governmental training courses in areas which provide knowledge and skills necessary to reach the employees's goals. List other self-study, seminars, etc. List any other activities that will provide the necessary KSA's.

8. Space provided for any comments or remarks by employee and/or supervisor, or notes on progress of short term goals.

9. Describe the career goals you wany to attain within the next two to five years.

10, 11, 12 see instructions for 5, 6, 7.

13. Self-explanatory.

14. Space provided for any comments or remards by employee and supervisor, etc. as is #8.

15, 16 are self-explanatory.

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13. ROTATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS DURING THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

[ ] A. ROTATIONAL ASSIGNMENT PLANNED (INDICATE WHERE IN 12. ABOVE)

[ ] B. ROTATIONAL ASSIGNMENT NOT PLANNED/REQUIRED

[ ] C. REQUIRED ROTATIONAL ASSIGNMENT COMPLETED

14. REMARKS

15. EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE	DATE	16. SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE	DATE

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