

Northwestern | HUMAN RESOURCES

INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN: GUIDE

The Individual Development Plan (IDP) process helps you create a roadmap for development. This process includes identifying unique strengths, clarifying professional development goals, and developing a plan of action for realizing your goals.

Managers have an opportunity to support your IDP through conversations using the REAL Career Conversations guides (for [Staff](#) and for [Managers](#)), regular check-ins, and feedback. Managers can also help make connections through their network and recommend resources that may assist you in achieving your professional development goal.

The IDP is a living document that should be updated throughout the year to reflect changes in goals, experiences, or skills. Although the IDP is not a performance evaluation tool, it can be updated to reflect individual performance and professional goals from the myHR Learn review form as part of the annual Performance Excellence cycle.

Section I: Defining Your Strengths

Employees typically have increased energy, enthusiasm, and higher levels of momentum when they intentionally use their strengths and talents to achieve their professional goals. This section helps you reflect on and identify your strengths so that you can leverage them in pursuit of the professional development goals you seek.

The following assessments are provided if you desire additional resources to aid you in identifying your strengths or career passions/interests:

[Work Values Test](#): Use this free assessment to explore your work values and what motivates you most within your career.

[VIA Character Strengths](#): A variety of low-cost assessments that identify your key strengths and how you can leverage them for career progress, satisfaction, and mindfulness. A free report is available when a new account is created.

Section II: Setting Professional Development Goals and Action Planning

This section helps you identify your professional development goals and develop an action plan that will help you achieve your goals. The IDP process is for everyone whether you are currently seeking career advancement or growing within your current role. As such, goals may focus on skill development, learning, or gaining additional experience for future roles or for your current role.

The development goals in this section should follow the SIMple goal format that is recommended for setting performance goals. For some SIMple goal examples, click [here](#).

While the goals may be broad, the action steps within the action plan should be specific and measurable. You should consider a wide range of possibilities when creating your action steps. See Appendix A for examples of action steps.

Lastly, you can set yourself up for success by identifying others (e.g., colleagues, peers, managers) that may help you achieve your goal. These partners may provide feedback, ask questions about progress towards the professional development goal, and identify resources to help you achieve your goal.