Individual Development Plan for Postdocs
Office of Postdoctoral Affairs
NC State University

Individual Development Plans (IDPs) provide a planning process that identifies both professional
development needs and career objectives. IDPs can also serve as a communication tool between individuals
and their mentors.

The IDP should help postdocs to identify:
- Long-term career goals, and the skills required to obtain those positions
- Short-term goals to reach their long-term career opportunities

An IDP is a living document that is meant to be revisited and changed as one’s career progresses. We
recommend that postdocs schedule time every six months to review, update, and revise their IDP based on
the previous six months progress.

Role of Department
The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs at NC State recommends that postdocs complete an IDP at the beginning
of their postdoctoral appointment and share in their initial meeting with their faculty mentor. IDPs can be
used as part of the annual review process to evaluate personal performance and to set new goals.

How to Complete Your IDP
1. **Conduct a self-assessment** of your skills, interests, and core competencies. Use this to identify
   areas you want to improve or gain more knowledge.
2. **Develop your IDP** based on your self-assessment, career goals, and resources. Frame your goals
   as SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timely) goals to improve your ability to reach
   them. Refer to resources to frame your goals, including NPA’s Core Competencies for Postdocs,
   professional standards within your field, and position descriptions for aspiring positions.
3. **Discuss your goals with your mentor**. Set up a meeting with your faculty mentor to discuss
   your completed IDP. Develop goals within your current position to achieve your long-term goals and
   ask for feedback on other goals or opportunities you may not have considered. This is a good
   opportunity to raise any additional questions regarding your position and set expectations about
   your working relationship.
4. **Develop an action plan** for accomplishing the goals set out in your IDP, including sub-goals and
timelines. Set a time for a follow up meeting.
5. **Secure an accountability partner**. This may be a mentor or peer with whom you share your IDP
   and who will hold you accountable for achieving your goals.
Skills Assessment

There are several general skills assessments available for early career scientists and postdocs, most notably the skills, interests, and values assessments from Science Careers, and assessment of the Core Competencies from the National Postdoc Association. Postdoc may also incorporate a discipline-specific set of competencies identified within their field of study.

National Postdoc Association Core Competencies for Postdocs

Core Competencies Assessment

Discipline-Specific Conceptual Knowledge
Postdocs should have a broad base of knowledge about their discipline, as well as depth of knowledge about their specific research area. Within their research area, postdocs should understand the limitations and gaps of the current research, and how their research can address those deficits. A broad knowledge of research outside their field of expertise can help postdocs to make new connections to their field.

Research Skill Development
As advanced researchers, postdocs are expected to be able to develop strong experimental design, collect and analyze data, apply for grants, and publish research articles.

Communication Skills
Postdocs must learn to communicate their research effectively, not only within the research community, but also to a broader, public audience. This includes effective communication in the following areas:

- Writing
- Speaking
- Teaching and Mentoring
- Interpersonal Communication

Professionalism
Adhere to the professional standards and practices of the immediate workplace, institution, and discipline. Contribute to the professionalism of the discipline through involvement in professional societies, and the institution through involvement in committees or organizations.

The National Postdoc Association identified the following types of professionalism:

- Workplace professionalism — connecting with the immediate working team
- Institutional professionalism — connecting with the research infrastructure
- Collegial professionalism — connecting with the discipline of expertise
- Universal professionalism — connecting with the society in representing expertise

Leadership and Management Skills
Leadership and management skills include project management, personnel management and supervision, the ability to facilitate effective teamwork, and pursuing leadership opportunities at the local, institutional, regional, and national level.
Responsible Conduct of Research
Postdocs should participate in training in responsible conduct of research to ensure they are conducting research in ethical and responsible ways.

My IDP – Science Careers
Skills Assessment
Interests Assessment
Values Assessment
Individual Development Plan

Self-Assessment Reflection

Use the results of your professional self-assessments, past performance evaluations, and self-reflection to identify areas of strength, your professional interests and values, and areas for improvement.

Strengths

Areas for Interest

Important Values

Areas for Improvement
Individual Development Plan

Career Goals

What is your first choice career goal?

What skills are necessary for this career?

What is your second choice career goal?

What skills are necessary for this career?

When would you like to transition into a new role?

What other factors must you consider when developing career opportunities (visa restrictions, partner, family etc.)?
### Individual Professional Development Plan

**[Name]**

**Last Updated:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency/Skill</th>
<th>Methods/Strategies</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Success Indicators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> Teaching Skills</td>
<td>Enroll in the Teaching and Communication certificate</td>
<td>Workshops offered through The Graduate School, department, DELTA, and NCSU Libraries</td>
<td>Fall 2017 semester</td>
<td>Develop a quality Teaching philosophy; improvement in teaching evaluations</td>
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# Individual Professional Development Plan

[Name]

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<tr>
<td>What competency or skill are you interested in improving?</td>
<td>What specifically will you do to improve this strategy?</td>
<td>Resources and offices that be used address a strategy</td>
<td>Timeline for engaging in strategy</td>
<td>How will you know you have gained this skill?</td>
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Resources


Stanford University, Office of Postdoctoral Affairs. (n.d.) *Individual development plan (IDP) – Initial meeting form* [PDF file]. Retrieved from [https://postdocs.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/opa_idp-initial_0.pdf](https://postdocs.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/opa_idp-initial_0.pdf)