The Individual Development Plan (IDP): Creation and Sustainability

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* Why is an IDP important?
* Postdoc/Mentor Responsibilities
* Taking Control of Your Career
* Next Steps-Developing Your IDP
* Visual representation/reminder of how you will spend your time achieving your goals
* Helps you to identify both short-term and long-term goals that can push you toward action
* Milestones along the way can be acknowledged and celebrated
* Serves as a communication tool between postdoc, faculty mentor, and others
Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Society, conducted a landmark postdoc survey designed to improve the training and research environments for postdocs by providing a better understanding of their experiences.

Sigma Xi’s survey data suggested that research/career plans for postdocs provide a framework of accountability and responsibility; and the data showed that postdocs with such plans were considerably more productive than those without.

Source: Geoff Davis, Principal Investigator, Sigma Xi Postdoc Survey, 2005
Growing national consensus from the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, Association of American Medical Colleges, and Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology and other organizations is that on-going training for (soft) skills is essential to a research-oriented scientific career.

Source: Nancy Schwartz, NPA Introduces Core Competencies, The POSTDOCket, Summer 2010
The NPA has established six core competencies to offer guidance to individual postdoctoral scholars who must seek out relevant training experiences, in collaboration with mentors, institutions, and other advisors who provide this training.

Source: The NPA Postdoctoral Core Competencies Toolkit: www.nationalpostdoc.org
The Six Core Competencies

1. Discipline-specific conceptual knowledge
2. Research skill development
3. Communication skills
4. Professionalism
5. Leadership and management skills
6. Responsible conduct of research

Source: The NPA Postdoctoral Core Competencies Toolkit: www.nationalpostdoc.org
The Core Competencies are meant to serve primarily as:

* A basis for self-evaluation by postdocs
* A basis for developing training opportunities that can be evaluated by mentors, institutions, and other advisors
* May be incorporated into a framework for periodic self-evaluation using the Individual Development Plan (IDP)

Source: The NPA Postdoctoral Core Competencies Toolkit: www.nationalpostdoc.org
* Take charge of your own professional development; actively seek opportunities outside the laboratory (e.g. professional development seminars and workshops in oral communication, scientific writing, and teaching)

* Seek regular feedback on your performance

* Work towards progressive responsibility and management of your research project as it matures
* Review IDP and provide feedback
* Regular reviews of progress
* Provide networking opportunities (colleagues, conferences, etc.)
Why is filling out an IDP important to you?

Brian Grimberg, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of International Health
The Center for Global Health & Diseases
*If you don’t have a destination and a route mapped out then you can take any direction to get there.*
* If you don’t have a destination and a route mapped out then you can take any direction to get there.
* Tells your PI that you do not plan on working for them for ever (or does it, what does your self assessment tell you?)

* Job market is challenging right now
  * Because we can all improve
  * Let’s you know when funding is potentially ending

* The most successful PIs have a plan

* It is required by the University/NIH/NSF

* Why is filling out an IDP important to you?
*Your PI will not plan your future for you
  * They have their own issues and are happy to have cheap labor
  * Generally people want to help and do the right thing if they made aware

*Lays the groundwork for you to break away
  * Lessens surprises and consternation
  * Provides template for your future position

*It is required by the University/NIH/NSF

*Why is filling out an IDP important to you?
*Real Examples*

*From Postdoc to Faculty*
* When I started
  * Get something down on paper
    * Make a Draft because this is new to many PI
  * Opens a dialog with PI (renew annually)
  * Does not have to be perfect at first
    * Select items from example that suit you to show PI
  * Did not accomplish one thing as planned

* Real Examples
* As I moved on - obtained Assistant Professor position
  * Very Specific
    * Facilitated Split
    * Pushed PI to be specific
  * Prepare for Independent Positions
  * Got everything done in plan
    * mini-MBA, Papers, Grants
  * Laid out Job Search Goals
    * Enticed an offer from Case
  * Met people on my own to write to for jobs

* Real Examples
Priority Items to address

* PUBLICATION PLAN/grant plan
  * When we plan to publish certain portions of your study (so we can successfully vie for grants later)
    * Not everything has to be earth shattering

* Training/Travel
  * Classes
  * Conferences
  * Job Search

Real Examples
*New International Postdoc*

Amal Arachiche, Ph.D.
Postdoctoral Fellow
Division of Hematology/Oncology
Graduate student

New Postdoc

Good start in the lab

Postdoctoral trainee

Individual Development Plan (IDP)

Why?

Postdoc doc

Visa

Different training: Animals, safety...

adaptation in the new environment

apartment form
Why is the IDP important for a good start in the lab?

1. Communication: (postdoc/PI) *Written* and *Oral* Communications

* It is important to understand and to be understood by your PI:
  * presenting your Skills assessment
  * presenting what training needs to be developed
  * to be able to present your research project goals briefly and clearly
I- Example of an IDP form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SKILLS ASSESSMENT (completed by trainee)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRENGTHS:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEVELOPMENT NEEDS:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| GOALS                                   |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JOB SEARCH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When do you anticipate beginning a job search?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What further activity or other training is needed before it is appropriate to start a job search?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please indicate if there are other factors that affect your job search:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. Answering specific IDP questions: help to build a plan for your career

* Presenting your short and long term goals
II- Example of an IDP form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short-term plans and needs for improving current performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What goals would you like to meet? AND/OR What skills need to be learned?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Long-term career plans and the necessary tools to meet these

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What skills or tools are necessary? (e.g., courses, technical skills, teaching, supervision)</th>
<th>How are you going to do this? (List any desired training, courses, assignments, opportunities)</th>
<th>When are you going to do this? (Course dates, assignment dates, semester, etc.)</th>
<th>Estimated Completion Date</th>
<th>Completion Date (Actual)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is important to me in a career?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What type of work would I like to be doing?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where would I like to be in an organization?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After reviewing the IDP form with your PI, we will have a clear perspective of what we want to do during these 2 years or more of postdoctoral experience.

(If we complete the form correctly)
Taking Control of Your Career: Self Assessment

* Ideal Self
* Real Self
* Strengths
* Gaps
* How you view your knowledge, skills and abilities

* Values, philosophy, purpose and aspirations (what you want out of life)

* Sometimes based on “facts” that you collected along the way

* Lack of self-awareness may cause inflation or deflation of the ideal self

* Ideal Self
* How others view your knowledge, skills and ability

* Receive this type of feedback through performance reviews and other assessment opportunities

* Seek out feedback from others
IDP Process Step 1: Self Assessment

*Take a few minutes to fill out the (NPA) Core Competencies Self-Assessment Checklist
*Strengths: where your ideal self and real self are similar. The competencies were you are extremely competent.

*Gaps: where your ideal self and real self are different. The competencies that need attention.

*When setting goals, balance is important
* IDP Process Step 2: Survey Opportunities

* Identify developmental needs by comparing current skills and strengths with those needed for your career choice
* Prioritize your developmental areas and discuss with your mentor how these should be addressed
* Identify career opportunities and select from those that interest you
Based on your Core Competencies Self-Assessment Checklist, fill in the Skills Assessment area of your IDP

Break-out: Group Discussion
The IDP maps out the general path you want to take and helps match skills and strengths to your career choices. It is a changing document, since needs and goals will almost certainly evolve over time as a postdoc.
The specific objectives of a typical IDP are to:

- Establish effective dates for the duration of your appointment
- Identify specific skills and strengths that you need to develop (based on discussions with your mentor)
- Define the approaches to obtain the specific skills and strengths (e.g., courses, technical skills, teaching, supervision) together with anticipated time frames
- Discuss your draft IDP with your mentor
- Revise the IDP as appropriate
* Meaningful to you
* Have concrete action steps
* SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timeframe)
* Take a few minutes to fill in the Goals area of your IDP

* Break-out: Group Discussion
What if I don’t accomplish the goals I established?

I already have a plan in my head; I follow my gut instinct

How do I account for the unknown (i.e. health issues, family concerns, etc.)?

Is this really useful beyond my postdoc position?
* Communication/language barriers
* Postdoc anxiety about immigration issues
* Fostering trust between mentor and trainee
* Trainee expectations (false vs. realistic)
* Take a few minutes to think about your potential roadblocks

* Break-out: Group Discussion on your roadblocks and potential ways to overcome.

* Common Roadblocks
The plan is just the beginning of the career development process and serves as the road map. Now it’s time to take action!

Put your plan into action

Revise and modify the plan as necessary. The plan is not cast in concrete; it will need to be modified as circumstances and goals change.

The challenge of implementation is to remain flexible and open to change.
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*The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs*