Individual Development Plan (IDP) Guide for People Leaders

This document has been designed as a **thinking tool**. It covers in detail all the steps that you and your employees will follow during the development planning process. However, you only need to use the parts of this guide that will help prepare you to discuss the IDPs each of your employees will create. You can start at the beginning and go through all the reflection questions or you can just focus where you need to. You may need more help thinking about some employees versus others. However you use it, this document stays with you and there is no requirement to complete it for each employee.

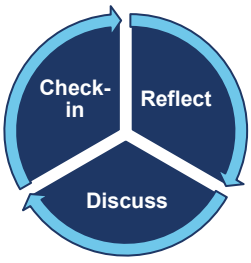
A Few Guiding Principals

Employee development is a joint effort between employees and their people leader. **Employees are responsible for their own careers, and for creating their own IDP, but they cannot achieve their goals without the input and support of their leaders.**

Any time is the right time to discuss your employees' development plans. You can begin after the annual performance assessment process, align it to the goal setting process, or whenever it is appropriate for your circumstances.

Individual Development Plans are for everyone. Employees in unionized roles can also benefit from discussing how they can develop in their current roles, and what they can develop to meet the needs of their career aspirations.

The Development Process



Development planning does not need to be an onerous task. Both the employee and people leader spend a bit of time thinking about what would be beneficial for the employee, they meet to discuss, and then check-in during 1:1's to see how things are going and if any adjustments need to be made based on employee, people leader, department or University needs.

A word for those who are unsure: This process should not be overwrought. **If you spend some time thinking about the answers to the questions, and nothing specific comes to mind, then stop**. If your employee is doing a great job, so nothing stands out, focus on development for their next role. Also, if you have a sense of where an employee needs to develop but aren't sure what the best solution is, we provide ideas, later in this guide, to help you make that determination.

Step 1: Reflect

Development Opportunities

Both you and your employee should take some time to think about what development opportunities will benefit them in their current, as well as future roles. A good starting point is asking yourself the question: **What would you like to see them do differently or better?**

Here are some further questions for your consideration:

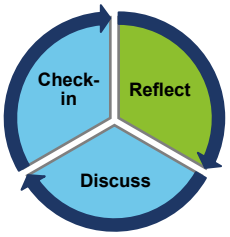
1 In their current role, are there **any job-specific skills** that could be improved? Software, such as MS Office or Teams, job-specific knowledge, such as best practices or new approaches in their area? Are there any internal processes not yet mastered, etc.?

2 Think about how the employee does their job. The **HOW** of someone's role is **the behaviours that they demonstrate as they execute their work**. Do they collaborate well? Do they build and maintain good relationships? Do they communicate effectively, verbally and in writing? How do they manage conflict? Have you had any feedback from their colleagues about specific behaviours? These are interpersonal and personal effectiveness skills. You can use our **Institutional Competencies** to think about the specific areas that may benefit from development.

3 Are there any new **division/department strategies or initiatives** that requires your team's support, and the employee may need to upskill to participate? For example, if your division is implementing a new software system, will this employee need to use it, or even be a power user? If yes, then appropriate training would be required.

4 Has the employee expressed any interest in other areas or what they feel their **career direction** might be? If yes, what skills or behaviours might they need to be successful in their next move? If not, but you think your employee is ready for a new challenge, perhaps offer some suggestions as to what would benefit them to meet the needs of the next step, whatever that may be.

Strengths, Talents & Passions



Every employee brings talents, strengths and passions to their role.
What have you noticed they are particularly good at? Technical skills?
Interpersonal skills like building relationships? Personal effectiveness skills like a great talent for organizing things? They also brings strengths like perseverance, fairness and social intelligence.

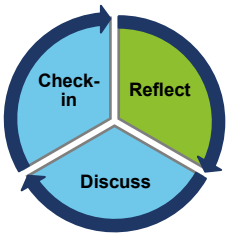
How might they contribute to their current role or next career steps?

Here are some links to identify strengths that you can use as a reference.

VIA Character Strengths

What kinds of tasks energize them?
What makes them speak with more animation and excitement?

Development Activities



Now that you've identified what skills/behaviours may benefit from development, what type of development activity is best suited?
HINT: The answer is likely not a course!

Development activities fall into three categories: **Education** (courses / programs), **Exposure** (feedback from experts) and **Experience** (on the job activities providing practice). There is a brief description below, and some ideas for **Exposure** and **Experience** activities.

Education: When you want the employee to learn a new skill or behaviour. If they know nothing about managing conflict, a course gives them a framework. If they need to start doing a lot of presentations and have little experience, again a course is the best place to start.

Exposure: When your employee already has some base knowledge, they can benefit from the expertise of another. It could be as simple as spending time with an Excel expert to learn a specific function, such as Macros. It could be more involved, such as working with a mentor on any subject, from giving presentations to career planning.

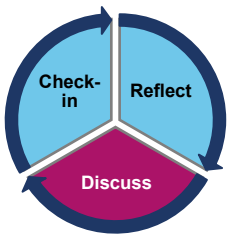
Experience: When you really need to do something to learn it. If an employee needs to start giving lots of presentations, the best thing a people leader can do is to give them lots of "safe" opportunities to practice. This can apply to any skill or behaviour from more tasks done in Excel to more opportunities to organize/run programs to acting in a project leadership role.

For more information on the three **E**'s of development, **visit this resource.**

To keep track of your ideas, you can make a note of which activities you think might be a good fit for each development opportunity you've identified. To get you started, some examples are provided below:

Development Opportunity	Development Activity
Learn to create and give presentations.	1. Take a course on presentations. 2. Practice with Jane Smith (experienced presenter). 3. Give updates on Project A in presentation form at each departmental meeting from Jan onwards.
Improve relationships with stakeholder A.	1. Leverage strength of curiosity to better understand stakeholder A's point of view, and concerns. 2. Seek input from trusted leaders on how to negotiate terms of how you will work with Stakeholder A in the future.
Learn project management skills to lead bigger projects in the future.	1. Explore options for learning project management skills – courses, certification, etc. 2. Enroll in appropriate program/course based on findings.

Step 2: Discuss



You have now done the heavy lifting and are ready to discuss development opportunities with your employee!

Suggested Approach

1. Have your employee walk you through their plan. Listen carefully, particularly to their aspirations and what they see as their passions, talents and strengths. These are the wind in your employee's sails – they are what engage them and keep them committed to a particular role, department or organization.

2. After they have presented the plan, it's important to first acknowledge and validate the positives that they have identified. You should share any strengths that you've noticed that they have not seen in themselves. Even if you aren't quite in agreement with everything on their list, it's best not to share that.

3. Next you should discuss their development opportunities and associated development activities. Be positive about their choices, and if helpful, suggest additional development **activities** that they might find useful.

4. You can also offer suggestions as to any development **opportunities** they might have missed. It's important to explain the reasons for your suggestion, with examples ideally, and why it's important for their success now and in the future. For example, if you want them to work on their communication skills, provide examples of when they weren't at their best with their communication and how that will affect their career in the future. Being specific is key.

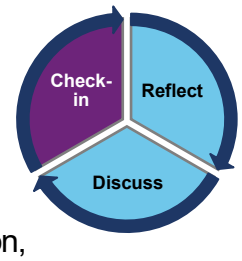
5. If they missed development opportunities for their current role and are focused on their career goals, share with them some areas you have identified that, when addressed, will make them even more effective in their current roles. They may not be aware of upcoming departmental or institutional initiatives that will require them to upskill. You can add those in to.

6. Employees should have two to four goals. Each goal could have more than one development activity associated with it, but keep in mind that you don't want them to be overwhelmed.

Once you both think you have captured the right development opportunities, and appropriate development activities you can sign the IDP. Signing is simply to show the employee's commitment to executing the plan, and your commitment to supporting them.

As a people leader, you will need to support your employees in reaching their goals by ensuring they have access to courses, the experts and the on-the-job experiences they will need to meet them. This will mean being intentional and planning for employees to undertake the activities that you've agreed on to reach their goals. Keeping up your end of the development partnership is critical to not just your employees' development, but their engagement and their success as well.

Step 3: Check-in



During your regular 1:1 meetings with your employee, you can take the opportunity at appropriate time intervals to check and see how they are progressing. If for example, you have set up an on-the-job experience such as giving a presentation, you should be checking in with them at your first 1:1 (if not sooner) after the experience.

How did it go? What went well? What would they do differently? When would they like another opportunity to practice?

Over the year, it's very possible that organizational, departmental or individual circumstances may change that will require updates or changes to goals. This is quite common, and you simply need to meet with your employee and make any adjustments required and save an updated IDP.

Additional Notes: