INDIVIDUAL CAREER PLAN

Where do you want to go from here? This question is at the heart of the Individual Development Plan (IDP) or Individual Career Plan (ICP), and one of the best career decisions you can make right now is to begin thinking about what you ultimately want as your career. Although this may sound obvious, a detailed plan will help ensure that you are acquiring the skills and experiences necessary for a seamless career transition. Furthermore, an ICP will help you avoid the dreaded “now what?” moment that many postdocs experience near the end of their training.

One of the best ways to approach this process is to begin at the end (i.e., with your dream job!) and detail all the skills and experiences necessary for successfully obtaining that position. Revise your plan yearly with updates on progress and/or changes in your career pursuit, and you will ensure that you are on a path to success.

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) has a developed a very useful IDP toolkit, called myIDP (<http://myidp.sciencecareers.org>), and there also are numerous other examples of IDPs online. You can begin the IDP process by reading this article about the IDP: <http://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2012/09/you-need-game-plan>. Once you are ready to start your ICP, though, feel free to use our user-friendly online ICP tool, which can be found at <https://gs.ucdenver.edu/myicp/>, or any of the IDP resources available online. An overview of this plan is included in the following section.

The ICP is YOUR career plan. Your mentor(s) should play an important role in helping you complete and refine your ICP, but you should invest some time reflecting on where you want to take your career and where you stand today BEFORE you meet with them. The general steps\* in this process for you and your mentor(s) are outlined below.

**Postdoctoral Fellow’s Steps:**

*Step 4:* Complete your ICP draft and discuss it with your mentor(s). Your mentor(s) can help you complete and finalize your ICP. Then, discuss your ICP annually with your mentor(s), and update and revise as necessary.

*Step 3:* Reflect on, and assess, your current skillset and experiences.

*Step 2:* Identify what skills and experiences you need to achieve those goals.

*Step 1:* Define your long-term (i.e., your career), intermediate-term (e.g., end of your postdoc), and short-term (e.g., end of this year) goals.

**Mentor’s Steps:**

*Step 2:* Help your postdoctoral fellow complete and finalize their ICP. What are they missing that would be helpful for achieving their career objective?

*Step 1:* Familiarize yourself with current career opportunities available to PhD scientists both inside and outside of academia.

*Step 3:* Establish regular (e.g., at least annual) reviews of the ICP, and help revise as necessary.

*\*These steps are modifications of an IDP developed by the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), and the original FASEB IDP can be found here:* [*http://www.faseb.org/portals/2/pdfs/opa/idp.pdf*](http://www.faseb.org/portals/2/pdfs/opa/idp.pdf)

INDIVIDUAL CAREER PLAN (ICP)

Postdoctoral Fellow’s Name:

Mentor’s Name:

Start date of this position:       Current date:

*Overview*: The ICP can be your roadmap to success – so, take the time now to decide where you want to go! Your mentor(s) should be an integral part of your career development and you should discuss your ICP with them; however, BEFORE you meet with your mentor(s), you should spend some real time reflecting on where you want to take your career and where you stand today. Your mentor(s) can help you fill in the gaps, but this is YOUR plan – so get in the driver’s seat! In the future, the ICP can be used as an annual tool to track progress towards reaching your career goals, and you should revisit it often.

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*GOAL ASSESSMENT:* The first step in defining your career goals is to identify the career you want to have. Once you have decided on your long-term career goal, you then can work backwards to identify the intermediate- and short-term milestones required to get there. Once you have defined your goal career and your plan for how to get there, you should discuss your plan with your mentor(s) and take advantage of their perspective and experience.

If you are unsure where you might go with your career, you can begin by taking the career interest assessment tools offered at myIDP ([http://myidp.sciencecareers.org](http://myidp.sciencecareers.org/)), or by exploring the following resources:

<https://npamembers.site-ym.com/default.asp?page=CareerOptions>

<http://www.sciencemag.org/sites/default/files/documents/away_from_the_bench_1.pdf>

Once you have identified your desired career, find a job posting for that position and use it to define the long-, intermediate- and short-term goals that will help prepare you to be a well-qualified applicant for that position.

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Long-term Goal:

Prospective Date:

General qualifications and personal/professional skills needed to reach this goal (e.g., additional research methods, networking, interviewing, communicating, etc.):

Strategies for obtaining these qualifications and skills (e.g., specific career development workshops, conference attendance, campus organizations, etc.):

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Intermediate-term (e.g., 3-5 years) goals:

Timeline:

General qualifications and personal/professional skills needed to reach this goal (e.g., additional research methods, networking, interviewing, communicating, etc.):

Strategies for obtaining these qualifications and skills (e.g., specific career development workshops, conference attendance, campus organizations, etc.):

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Short-term (e.g., 1-2 years) goals:

Timeline:

General qualifications and personal/professional skills needed to reach this goal (e.g., additional research methods, networking, interviewing, communicating, etc.):

Strategies for obtaining these qualifications and skills (e.g., specific career development workshops, conference attendance, campus organizations, etc.):

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*SKILL ASSESSMENT:* The next step in developing your ICP is to determine where you stand today. Identify the specific skills required to reach your long-, intermediate-, and short-term goals (e.g., an elevator pitch, grant writing, business management, professional networking, etc.), and then reflect on your current skillset.

Rank each skill on a scale from 1-5, where 1 = lowest level of proficiency and 5 = highest level of proficiency. The status of completion for each skill should be determined at your annual ICP review. Create as many skill profiles as necessary, and be as complete as possible for each specific skill.

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Communication skills (e.g., elevator pitch, grant writing, etc.):

Current skill level:

Strategies needed to close the gap (e.g., workshops, courses, etc.):

Deadline:

Year:

Completion status:

Completed  Progress  No progress

Comments and/or evidence of progress:

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Research/management skills (e.g., techniques, data analysis, etc.):

Current skill level:

Strategies needed to close the gap (e.g., workshops, courses, etc.):

Deadline:

Year:

Completion status:

Completed  Progress  No progress

Comments and/or evidence of progress:

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Professional/Interpersonal skills (e.g., collaborating, networking, interviewing, etc.):

Current skill level:

Strategies needed to close the gap (e.g., workshops, courses, etc.):

Deadline:

Year:

Completion status:

Completed  Progress  No progress

Comments and/or evidence of progress: