

INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN GUIDELINES FOR POSTDOCS

OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Taking the time to plan your career path will help you use your postdoctoral training period more efficiently and effectively. Having career-planning discussions with your mentor(s) will help you identify opportunities and align your expectations with those of your mentor(s).

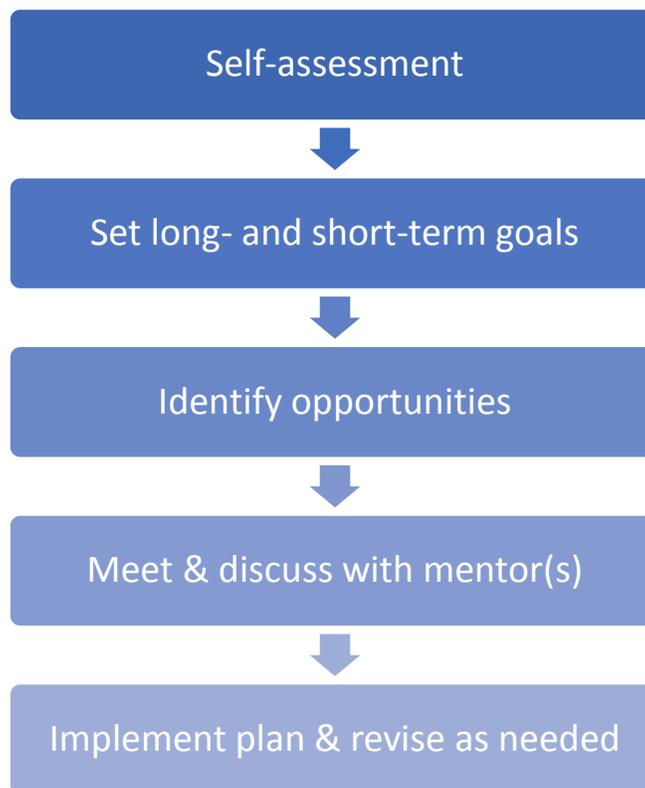
An Individual Development Plan (IDP) is a tool for you to implement a career plan. Your IDP will help you to:

- Set long- and short-term career goals;
- Track accomplishments and training progress;
- Connect with resources to improve your skills; and
- Initiate an on-going dialog between you and your mentor(s) about career development.

OVERVIEW OF THE IDP PROCESS FOR POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLARS

The IDP is most useful as a career planning tool when it is completed annually in conjunction with a performance review.

The following guidelines for postdocs, based on the below steps, are suggestions to help you complete your IDP by providing techniques, questions and exercises to help structure your reflections.



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GUIDELINES FOR POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLARS

SELF-ASSESSMENT & ACCOMPLISHMENTS (PARTS I AND II)

IF THIS IS THE FIRST TIME YOU'RE COMPLETING AN IDP

- » List the skills and achievements you are bringing with you from your prior position or graduate training.
- » What skills and achievements do you hope to gain in this position? What challenges do you anticipate?

IF THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME YOU'RE COMPLETING AN IDP

- » List your achievements and new skills developed in the last year.
- » Are there any skills or achievements that you wish you had gained? What barriers prevented you from gaining them?
- » Enlist the help of your peers and your mentor(s) to help identify your strengths and areas for improvement.

SET GOALS (PARTS III AND IV)

RESEARCH GOALS

- » Identify the overall goal of your project or scholarly work – what do you want to accomplish during your postdoc?
- » What are the specific objectives (or accomplishments) for this year to help meet your overall goal?

LONG-TERM GOALS

- » What type of position do you want to obtain in the next 3–5 years?
 - » Think about what you want out of your career.
 - » What type of work do you enjoy doing? What types of work do you want to learn more about?
 - » How do you want to be valued as an employee?
 - » What level of work-life balance is the most comfortable for you?
- » One of your goals can focus on exploring a couple career options to narrow a focus early in your postdoc career.

SHORT-TERM GOALS

- » Set 4-6 to two SMART goals (see below) that you will accomplish in the upcoming year, considering what resources (people, CU trainings, professional societies, online, etc.) can be utilized.
- » Consider the following areas:
 - » Discipline-Specific conceptual knowledge
 - » Research skills
 - » Communication
 - » Professionalism
 - » Leadership & project management
 - » Responsible conduct of research



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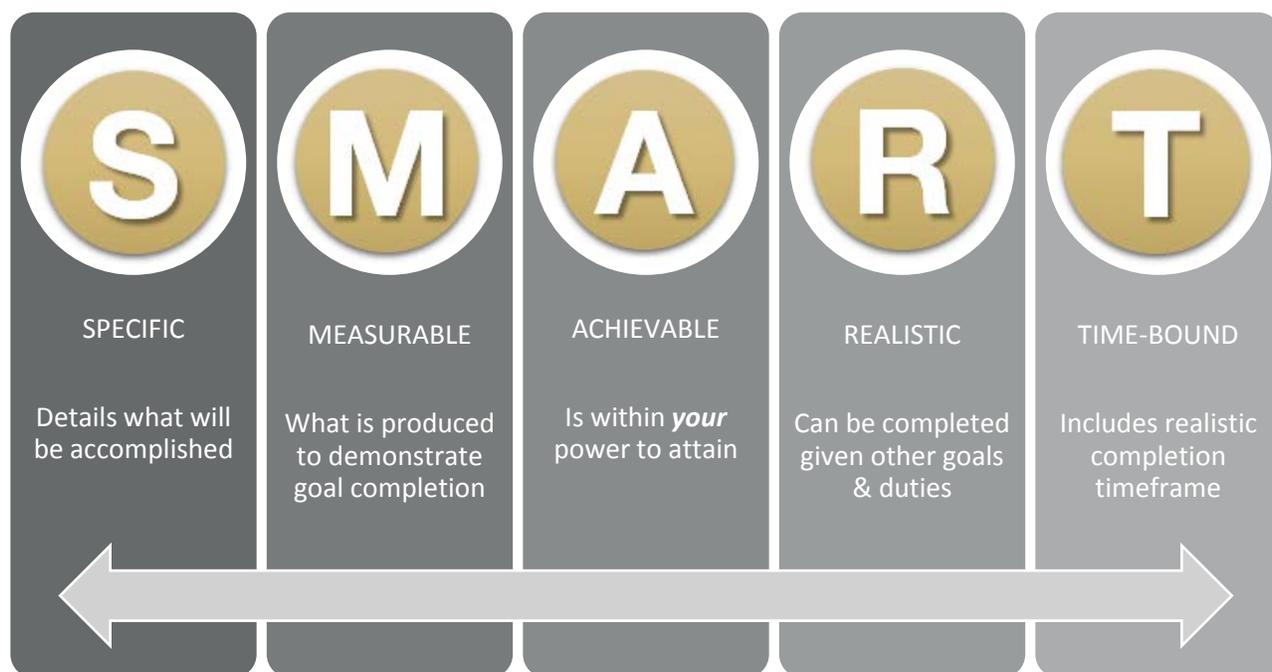
MEET & DISCUSS WITH MENTOR(S)

- » Schedule a one-hour conversation with your mentor(s) to discuss your IDP & performance evaluation.
- » Revise your IDP as appropriate based on this conversation.

IMPLEMENT PLAN AND REVISE AS NEEDED:

- » *Meet with your mentor(s) regularly* to discuss your career development (the first section of the IDP template includes a space to set this meeting).
- » The best practice is to meet weekly; however, you may need creativity & flexibility to meet scheduling challenges, for example:
 - » Flex scheduling on a weekly basis.
 - » Meet via Skype.
 - » Complete weekly status reports via email and request feedback on the reports.
- » *Briefly revisiting the IDP mid-year* may be useful to re-focus efforts and re-evaluate whether the one-year goals are still applicable or realistic in the remaining time.
- » *Keep track of your accomplishments* over the course of the year to make completing next year's IDP easier.

SMART GOALS



SMART goals help you successfully reach your goals by defining a clear direction and timeframe.



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EXAMPLES

SIMPLE GOAL	AREA(S) LACKING	SMART GOAL
Gain knowledge on melanoma.	Not specific, measurable or time-bound.	Write a review article discussing mechanisms of MAPK and AKT pathway activation during melanoma progression; submit a draft of the review article to my mentor(s) by the end of July.
Be awarded an NIH F32 Fellowship by July 1.	Not achievable.	Submit an application for an NIH F32 Fellowship by the April 8 deadline. If the fellowship is not awarded, submit an A1 resubmission application at the next available grant cycle (est. August 8).
Increase my professional communication skills by attending four national meetings within the next year.	Not realistic or specific.	Increase my professional communication skills by presenting a poster and attending the Professional Skills Development Workshop at the APS meeting next March.

MORE INFORMATION ON SMART GOALS

Access [SkillSoft](#) through [MyCuInfo](#) (under Training) and search for the following:

- » SMART Goals and Action Plans
- » Achieving Smart Goals
- » Well-written Goal Statements

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- » [Office of Postdoctoral Affairs \(OPA\) career planning consultations](#)
- » [National Postdoc Association \(NPA\) core competencies](#)
- » [Science Careers online IDP](#)
- » [NPA Career Planning & Exploration](#)

CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD THE CU BOULDER IDP TEMPLATE

