

Development Discussions Guide



For many employees, career development is an essential part of their satisfaction. Without a sense of the possibilities for the future with the city, employees can easily disengage from their work. The size of our organization, and the tremendous variety in terms of work settings/responsibilities, provides many development avenues for our employees. By working with employees on their development plans, we can engage our workforce and benefit from well-placed talent across the organization.

Purpose

- Find out about the employee's short/long term professional goals
- Help the employee map out the skills they will need to develop in order to achieve their professional goals
- Help your employees develop, improve and periodically re-evaluate Individual Development Plans (IDPs)
- Identify opportunities for growth and skill acquisition (i.e., training, stretch assignments, etc.)
- Check on progress toward professional goals
- Provide encouragement and coaching
- Share what you can about your career path and what you've learned along the way. Be open to questions your employees have about your experiences

Frequency

For benchmark purposes, consider meeting with your employees 2-4 times per year to discuss their career and professional development plans. This number is simply a suggestion; keep in mind that some employees may have less need to discuss development plans than others. Again, employees and supervisors are empowered to work together to set a pace that makes sense.

Length

It's a good rule of thumb to set aside at least 90 minutes for these discussions, as this allows time to tackle these bigger, future-oriented discussions. It's important that this be uninterrupted time, dedicated to your employee. If going off-site makes it easier to eliminate distractions and interruptions, take the opportunity to do so.

Topics

Development discussions are focused on learning about your employee's short and long term professional goals, and helping him/her identify a path for realizing those goals. Professional goals will vary from employee to employee. Some individuals may be interested in

advancement opportunities within their department or the larger organization; others may want to focus on developing their skills in their current role.

The following questions are designed to help fuel a meaningful conversation about your employee's goals and aspirations:

- Are there any projects you'd really like to work on if you were given the opportunity?
- What would you like to be doing in 1, 3, 5 years?
- Are there skills you feel you need to develop in order to achieve your goals?
- What ideas do you have for acquiring those skills?
- Do you feel like you're making progress on your goals here? Why or why not?
- What work are you doing here that feels most in line with your longer term goals?
- Tell me about the projects you have worked that make you most proud
- What activities in your job motivate you to excel? Which activities are most interesting to you?
- What do you think your talents and skills are? Let me share some observations about your skills and how they contribute to the mission of the organization

An [Individual Development Plan template](#) is available as a resource to help employees organize and map out their plans for their own development. During career development discussions, you might provide your employee with suggestions and guidance for completing their Individual Development Plan. The HR Department offers training on Development Plan Writing as well; if appropriate, you can encourage your employee to attend. If your employee has completed a development plan, you can use these discussions to review progress toward their development goals, offer suggestions, brainstorm about stretch assignments that would help to advance their goals, etc.

Coaching Tips for Supervisors

Some employees may not feel comfortable fully sharing their career goals and aspirations with a supervisor. You can help put employees at ease by using the following tips:

- Explain how your role as a supervisor can help them with career development and planning
- Demonstrate your comfort with their exploration of opportunities outside their current role or team by openly discussing the possibilities
- Be supportive of an employee's goal to remain in his or her current position by identifying development opportunities and/or restructuring their current responsibilities

Agreements/Next Steps

- Allow your employee to take the lead in outlining their next steps for moving forward with their plan
- Collaborate with your employee when establishing completion dates for the action steps contained in their development plan
- Summarize any action you will take to support them and provide timelines
- Set a time for your next development discussion to check-in on their progress



Questions for Development Conversations

Opening

- How are things going?
- What would you like to focus on at this meeting?
- What kind of progress have you been making with _____?

Skill Development

- Are there skills you have you feel are currently under utilized?
- Are there responsibilities for which you are under prepared?
- What training do you feel would help you with your professional goals?
- What's a part of your job you wish you didn't have to do?
- What skills would you like to develop? How would that benefit our team?
- Have you given thought to stretch assignments that might help you develop or grow? What would they be?
- Are there certifications you need in order to achieve your goals? What are your plans for getting those certifications?

Career Planning

- What is your short-term career objective? What about long-term?
- What would you like to accomplish next year?
- What motivates you (e.g., title, money, work/life balance, etc.)
- What projects would you really like to work on?
- How are you feeling about your career progression?
- What's next?

Support

- What resources do you need to help you with your plans?
- What type of support can I provide?
- What do you need from the team?

Accountability

- Have you completed an individual development plan?
- What progress are you making with your individual development plan?
- What's getting in the way of your advancement (assuming the employee is working on advancement)? What can you do to overcome those obstacles?
- Can we look at the timeline for your action plan and see how things are going?
- Have you made plans to take that class/training?
- When would you like to meet again? What do you want to accomplish between now and then?